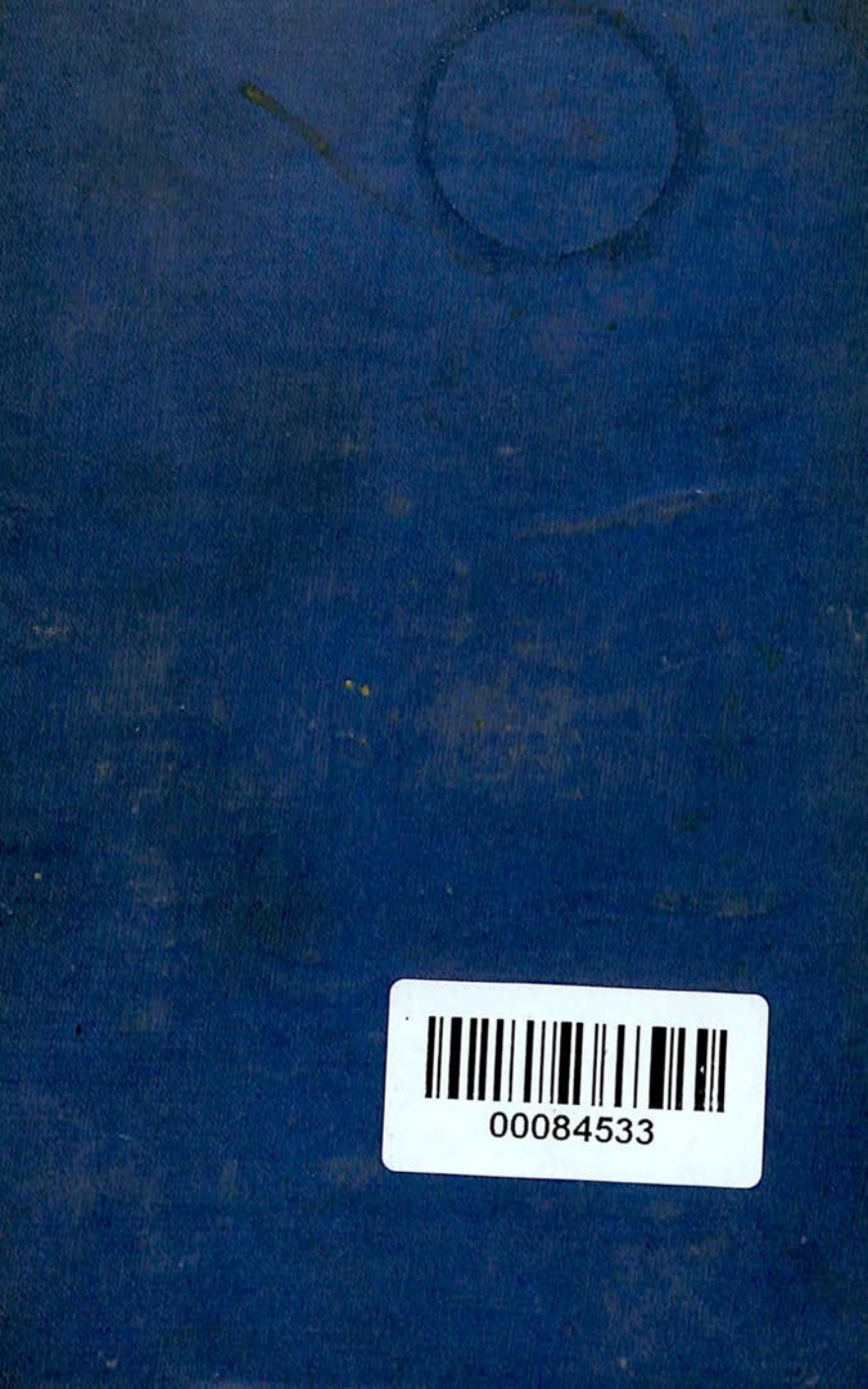
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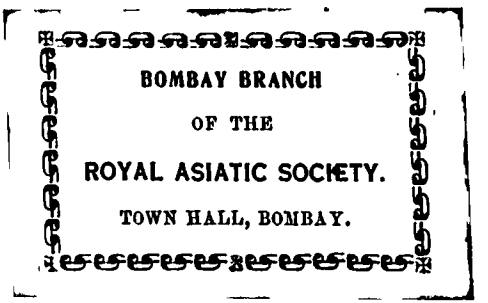

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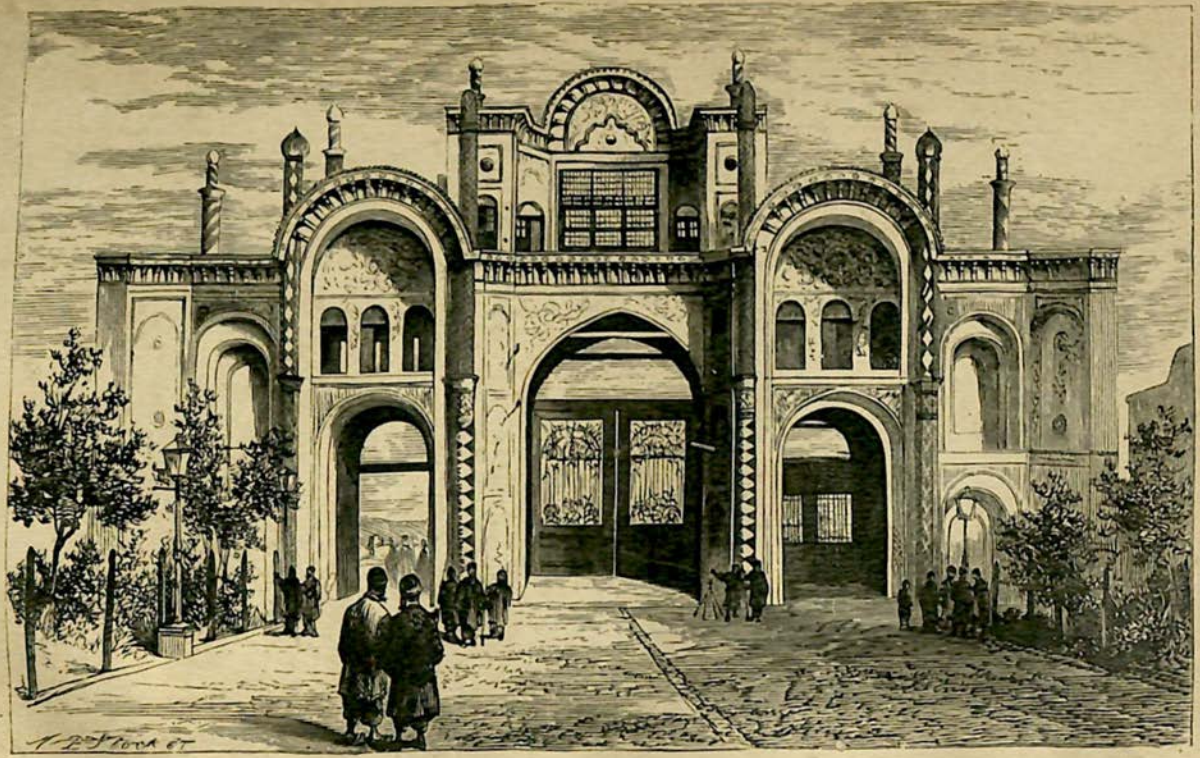
MY WANDERINGS IN PERSIA.



ENTRANCE TO THE SHAH'S TOWN PALACE, TEHERAN.

MY WANDERINGS

IN

PERSIA.

84533

BY

T. S. ANDERSON.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS,

AND MAP

SHOWING THE

SCIENTIFIC FRONTIER IN AFGHANISTAN, AND THE RUSSIAN ADVANCE IN CENTRAL ASIA.

With Author's Routes, etc.

XC 63

LONDON:

JAMES BLACKWOOD & CO., LOVELL'S COURT,

PATERNOSTER ROW.

1880.

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Dedication.

TO THE MEMORY OF

AN AFFECTIONATE AND DEEPLY-LAMENTED

SISTER

WHOSE NAME WILL EVER BE FONDLY CHERISHED,

AND ALSO TO ONE

WHOSE LOVE I GREATLY PRIZE,

IS THIS WORK MOST AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

BY THE AUTHOR.

SHEFFIELD.
December, 1879.

PREFACE.

HAD I chosen a different title for my notes, I should have decided upon 'Persia as it is.' I have endeavoured carefully, and at the same time to interestingly delineate the chief characteristics of the modern Persians, both historically and nationally; proving, at the same time, the great similarity which yet exists between the ancient and more modern manners, customs, etc., and also the painfully evident deterioration which has taken place since the time of the Persian Empire's greatness.

The routes throughout Persia have also received some attention in their description, etc.

My roughly written notes may prove of some interest to those students of Eastern affairs who acknowledge the position in which Persia is placed. Should it afford such service to them, or a source of interest to any portion of the English community who may in some degree be concerned in Eastern affairs, they will have more than accomplished the writer's desire.

T. S. ANDERSON.

SHEFFIELD,
August, 1879.

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Authors Route ..... Blue line
Old Indian British frontier ..... Pink line
Sea ..... Red line
Old Russian Boundary ..... Green line
Advanced Russian Boundary. Yellow line
RUSSIAN EMPIRE
SIBERIA
FRANCE
SPAIN
TURKEY
BLACK SEA
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
ASIA MINOR
EGYPT
ARABIA
PERSIA
AFGHANISTAN
TURKESTAN
BELUCHISTAN
INDIA
INDIAN OCEAN
CHINESE EMPIRE
SCIENTIFIC FRONTIER

MY WANDERINGS IN PERSIA.

CHAPTER I.

Eastward bound.—At Southampton.—Victims to Neptune.—P. and O. berths.—Storm at Sea.—Gibraltar.—Acquaintance aboard Ship.—Malta and its Churches.—Religion.—Alexandria, its Ruins.—The Suez Canal; Previous Attempts at its Construction.

EASTWARD bound! Such was my salutation to a friend on the morning of March 15th, 1875. I had not many hours previously received from the India Office orders for Persia (Teheran). My route was marked out, and I was to be in readiness three weeks from that date.

From Southampton I was to proceed to

Bombay, *viâ* the Suez Canal; at that place I should tranship for Bushire, and thence to Teheran, 900 miles by caravan, which, it appeared, was the only means of locomotion in that far-distant land.

The time was but short in which to make the numerous necessary preparations, the various visits and adieus; for there is much more than is probably imagined in the words 'Eastward bound!' My first thoughts were to make inquiries as to the land of the Medes and Persians, in which my lot had been cast—the answers to my many inquiries were generally the same. Teheran was a place unknown by the world at large; a few there might be in the Despatch Department of the Foreign Office who knew the name, but even this knowledge was very limited.

With some difficulty I eventually ascertained what would be most requisite in the way of outfit, etc. 'Be sure and take a good supply of ammunition for your Martini-Henry,' said

one friend. 'Don't forget quinine and chlorodyne,' remarked another.

The last article (a stout hunting-saddle) for the completion of my outfit was ordered, and I left that great labyrinth of foreign agencies to spend a few quiet days in Yorkshire. These appeared of very short duration. The last farewell had been spoken, and with many a 'God speed you!' I once more found myself at express speed *en route* for London, there to receive some final instructions and to proceed on to Southampton.

I had been requested to take out a large supply of lamps, consigned to the Director-General of Telegraphs in Persia, but owing to an important order for similar apparatus for the Polar Expedition, then about setting out, I was compelled to leave without them.

A berth had been secured for me by Messrs. Grindlay and Co. in the P. and O. Steamship *Geelong*, sailing the following day (April 14th).

At Southampton were two *compagnons de voyage*, anxiously awaiting my arrival. One was bound for Cawnpore, the other was under similar orders as myself. We were favoured with a beautifully bright morning; not a cloud dimmed the sky as we were towed alongside the *Geelong*, after having passed through the due, though somewhat annoying, formalities of the Southampton Docks Department.

On seeing the manner in which luggage is hoisted and removed from one place to another, I began to be somewhat alarmed as to the safety of a portion of my baggage, which, however, had fortunately been packed with considerable care and attention.

On arriving at the steamer, the deck presented a scene of great bustle and excitement; luggage and provisions being hauled up as quickly as it is in the power of Lascar seamen to do so. On the upper deck were groups of persons busily engaged in a few last words to the friends whom perhaps they were destined

to never more see. Our own thoughts naturally wandered away, endeavouring to pierce the thick veil of the future, wondering which of the trio would return first to his native land. Visions of joyous greetings and warm welcomes flitted before me as I stood dreamily watching the waters beating against the ship's sides. Yet, during these pleasant dreams, it was impossible to forget the anxious loving faces I had left behind—sorrowing friends who perhaps thought too much of the dangers to which we must be exposed.

We were not, however, long allowed to indulge in these speculations; the captain's voice was heard ordering the decks to be cleared of all but crew and passengers, and in a short time the anchor was weighed and the *Geelong* moved gracefully away towards the Channel. Bets were freely offered and accepted as to our individual powers of resisting that peculiar sensation in the lower regions commonly called sea-sickness.

The first to succumb was Mr. Jefferies (who was bound for Persia), and his mournful look, as he leaned over the bulwarks, was piteous to behold. Mr. Coates, in the generosity of his sympathetic heart, soon joined him, and for a considerable time this mutual affection was severely tested. I, for the time being, was free from the hideous sensation ; but, alas! my time drew nigh. As our speed increased, so, unfortunately, did the rolling of the ship, assisted by a somewhat boisterous wind, and I with tottering steps endeavoured to find some secluded spot where my outraged feelings might be satisfied ; but ere I reached the main-deck the spell was broken—Neptune had one more victim.

Soon after sunset we retired to our shelves, which require the ingenuity of an Alpine-climber to scramble up without coming in sudden contact with some projecting piece of woodwork. Experience is bought, and nowhere is the fact more exemplified than when

the severe bump of the previous night reminds one that wood is harder than a human cranium. For the first few mornings our awakening thoughts were painfully illustrated by a scream from a fellow-sufferer as he, in sleepy forgetfulness, would, in rising above his feelings, catch the sharp edge of the upper rack.

On this, our first night on the waste of waters, after the excitement and sufferings of the day, we thought that sleep was indeed a boon and a blessing to man. The following morning two only were reported sick: one of these being Mr. Jefferies, who was, in fact, a perfect slave to his feelings until the day we landed at Bushire.

By this time, around us was nothing but a wide expanse of water. At one moment we were on the summit of a huge wave, the next we were down in an abyss of foam. The spectacle was grand in its reality and sublimity. Crossing the Bay we experienced some rough weather. One storm, terrific in its fierceness,

and lasting upwards of five hours, passed over us near St. Vincent. I had many times wished to witness a storm at sea; and now I felt awestruck at the grandeur and solemnity of these mighty walls of water. We, a mere speck on the horizon, with an almost fathomless sea around us, were nothing compared with the majesty of power exhibited in these tempestuous outbursts.

On the evening of the 18th we anchored off Gibraltar. The town appeared to be brilliantly lighted up, and the view from the ship's deck was one not to be forgotten. In this fortress one is reminded of some mighty giant raising his strong arm in defiance of all comers, conscious of his own strength allowing liberties which would be shackled by a meaner power. The rocks bristle with guns, and woe betide any enemy who would dare attempt to force a passage here. On shore we saw dark visaged Spaniards, in their peculiar-looking cloaks and slouched hats, trying to palm off

bad cigars to any one whom they thought could be caught. The familiar red coat of the British soldier, who to us appeared to walk with a firmer step on this foreign soil, was a common sight.

We were not ashore long before a gun fired from the mail-boat sounded our return.

Shortly after midnight we steamed for Malta. By this time all was merriment aboard; the apparent depression of spirits seemed to have left behind a cheerfulness scarcely to be expected.

It is surprising how quickly a friendly circle is formed aboard ship; an acquaintance which at any other time would require months to form, is here ripened into open friendship in a comparatively short time. Unless such was the case, passengers from the Far East would have but a poor time of it. Destined to see the same faces for weeks together, hear only a few voices—each day the same—it would be pitable indeed if it were not so. In fact, after

a month's intimate acquaintance with a few fellow-passengers, the day of separation seems an affecting one: a hearty grip of the hand, and one feels as if some dear friend had departed.

Of our list of passengers, a few were for Bombay and Calcutta, others for the North West Provinces, Burmah, and Persia; and on arrival in Bombay never in all probability to see each other again—the thought is an impressive one; yet such is the case time after time.

Every day each steamer leaves our shores, these acquaintances are thus formed, and in a few weeks are as suddenly broken.

We arrived in the roadsteads of Malta on the morning of the 22nd.

The churches, convents, markets, etc., were each in turn visited. The buildings in Malta belong to a style of architecture long since passed into oblivion: the streets are exceedingly narrow, but, unlike other Oriental towns, they are well paved.

At every step we met something to attract attention. A Dominician or St. Augustine monk, with his cowl and beads, would pass by silently and ghostlike. Next would be seen some half dozen nuns, whose monotonous tread speaks ill of the highly religious training they are supposed to be endowed with. As a contrast to the stealthy movements of Maltese monks and friars, the heavy tread and cheerful laughter of two or three troopers reach our ears.

The market at Malta deserves praise: in this spacious building almost any imaginable fruit can be had at very low prices.

The church of St. Michael's also commands admiration, if only from an architectural point of view. All religous worship is tolerated in this church, the believer in Romish mummeries, the follower of Luther or Calvin, the Jew, or the more modern style of Christianity: a place is set apart for each, no one daring to interfere.

The absurd prostrations and genuflexions of the Church of Rome are nowhere more contemptibly repulsive than in Malta. Those who are wont to look with a lenient eye on the doings of Rome, should study Maltese character and the doctrines there taught by the hypocritical agents of the apostolic vicar.

In Russia the present writer has seen saint-worship, rude prostrations, and other fantastical modes of pretended worship, almost equally disgusting as those practised by the so-called direct apostles of Christ, but certainly not by a people who have known the benefits of civilisation, as do the adherents of the Romish Church.

Alexandria, our next calling place, had previously been to my mind the ideal of Oriental beauty. It is said that ignorance is bliss; and had I known what to expect in this ancient city, I believe the wiser part would have been chosen, and I should still entertain a sacred opinion of Alexandria by having remained aboard the steamer.

The morning was intensely hot: a parching east wind was blowing; myriads of sand-flies were busy on every object from which a single drop of blood could be taken.

This great pagan capital, once the second city of the Roman Empire, the burial place of its illustrious founder, Alexander the Great, which has boasted of holding no inferior position in learning or wealth, is now a mere heap of crumbled ruins. The grandeur of its palaces, baths, theatres, etc., have, like the frail edifice of paganism of which it was once the champion, passed into the darkness of an almost forgotten past.

Its temples, gorgeously built, dedicated to the pagan gods—into which thousands of ignorant yet devout worshippers have entered with silent and reverential tread, from which the dread sentences of the pagan laws have been thundered out against those who had incurred the displeasure of the gods, and where all the abasing practices of a paganized people have been un-

ceasingly carried on—are now ruins of an ancient grandeur.

It is composed chiefly of Arabs, Jews, Italians, dirt and dust. Some things there were which rendered our visit not altogether a sacrifice to comfort, yet I was not sorry to once more find myself under the shady awning of the *Geelong's* deck.

The following day we arrived at Port Seyed (the entrance of the Suez Canal). It would not perhaps be out of place to say here that this last attempt was not the first made to connect the Mediterranean and Red Seas.

About 1,000 years before the Christian era an attempt was made to cut through this strip of land, but it failed after an enormous sacrifice of life. The enterprise was a second time commenced some centuries afterwards, but again resulted in a complete failure; and so it remained until the great task was once more planned by M. de Lesseps; and everyone

knows to what extent his efforts have been rewarded.

Although with great difficulty and at no small cost is this highroad to India kept open, yet our war vessels and heavily burdened steamers now pass through with but little difficulty. Steam drags are in constant use to clear away the ever falling sand. The present canal is some distance from the ruins of the ancient one.

CHAPTER II.

Ancient Assyrian Road.—Rameses.—Bubastis.—Cairo.—The Pyramids.—Aden and the Arabs.—Bombay.—The Kinship of the World.—Towers of Silence.—Caste.—Kurrachee.—An Eastern Wedding.—Attack by Arab Pirates.—Bushire and British Influence.

LEAVING Port Seyed, the first interesting sight is the ancient highroad to Assyria.

On this road Abraham came 2,000 years B.C., after having received the divine command to leave all and go to a land which should be shown him.

On this road Joseph was carried as a slave into Egypt, after being sold by his jealous and suspicious brethren. They also, in their turn, traversed the same road to find food during the great famine in Canaan.

The father of the twelve tribes journeyed along the same path when he went down to Egypt to once more behold his favourite lad. The mournful *cortége* bearing the bones of Jacob back to Canaan would pass along this road. These and many more equally stirring incidents could be thought of which would make the traveller gaze with reverential awe on this great historical road.

Not far from this, between Alexandria and Cairo, we had seen the ruined cities of Rameses, Bubastis, Pithon, etc.

Rameses is the place from whence the children of Israel commenced their long and weary march to the land promised them by their God.

At the present time two gates remain—the eastern and northern ones. It is more than probable that the Israelites passed through the eastern one; and as the moon spread its silvery light over these ancient ruins, we almost fancied that in it we saw the pillar of fire threading its guiding course eastward.

Bubastis, once a large city, is now, with the exception of a porch and dome of the once magnificent and popular temple of Pharaoh the Great, the second temple of the goddess Diana of Ephesus, but a heap of dust.

Our stay in Cairo was not protracted, owing to the necessity of speedily renewing our travels; yet we found time to visit those time-honoured piles, the Pyramids, which, defying time and decay, still stand through these countless years in their majestic grandeur, the oldest columns in the known world. We without difficulty imagined the patriarch Abraham standing in solemn wonderment under the shade of these giant structures; and the vision was made more real by an aged Arab, who, with erect form and pleasing countenance, was at the time passing, followed by a train of swarthy attendants.

After accomplishing the somewhat fatiguing ascent, we beheld the vast Lybian desert, and in the distance the sparkling waters of the

Nile, as they smoothly glide through the sandy plain. The distance from Cairo to the Pyramids is performed either by a camel or donkey-ride—the latter by far preferable.

From Suez to Aden was the most trying part of our journey. The heat during the summer months is intense. The homeward voyage is sometimes spoken of with dread, even by those who have for years borne the heat of India.

The most amusing thing here is the swimming propensities of the young Arabs; they are to be seen in dozens paddling around the newly-anchored vessels in small canoes, and should sixpence be dropped in the sea, a dozen dark little forms will immediately plunge down, struggling hard for the coin. The successful diver will in a few moments find the surface at the opposite side the vessel. They appear to totally disregard the presence of sharks, which in large numbers are seen around Aden.

Leaving this Eastern Gibraltar, our next thoughts were of landing; and as the time of our arrival drew near, a feeling of intense longing gradually came over me. I wished to see this land where so many of England's brave sons have shed their blood in its defence—the land spoken of as the brightest jewel in our monarch's crown.

The approach to Bombay is exceedingly picturesque: the coast is covered with tropical splendour, but the real beauties of this fair city are to be found in its suburbs. As our vessel anchored, the confusion became even greater than on the day we sailed.

At last we in our turn were allowed by the Customs officers to depart in peace.

We hired a coolie-wallah's boat to tranship our luggage on board the *Burmah* for Bushire, and to land ourselves on *terra firma;* but several times I resigned myself to my fate, thinking every moment we should be capsized. Our boat shot through the water at a mar-

vellous speed. In vain did we conjure them to go steadier; but, perhaps owing to their slight acquaintance with the English language, our words and tone apparently goaded them on to renewed energies. Had it been a race for dear life the waters could not have more suddenly parted. It was with a feeling of deep thankfulness that I jumped on shore. The man who to all appearances owned the boat came to me, his face beaming, said something about 'Very quick!' and 'Good sahib!' and presented his joined palms for the reward of his labours.

The whole world is akin in various ways. In all countries, without exception, in which I have travelled, the law of imposture on the unsuspicious or ignorant traveller holds supreme sway. Thus it was in Bombay. The native, in whatever capacity he was hired, would find means to impose upon the liberality of a newcomer.

In Persia, this systematic mode of secret

robbery is accepted as a virtue more than a crime; and it would indeed be difficult to point out a single man, throughout the whole empire, who on every occasion where it is possible does not indulge in this passion for 'Modockhil,' or 'made money.'

Even in London, what more pleasant to the eye of 'cabby' than a provincialist who, having mistaken his way midst the wilderness of streets, takes refuge in one of these public vehicles, and is driven, not direct, but as cabby chooses?

Outside Bombay are many scenes of peculiar interest: the 'Tower of Silence,' the place where the Parsees convey their dead, not for interment, but as food for the ravens, who sit croaking on the towers all day long. When a body is taken up and stretched across the bars, the ravens, with loud screechings, fly off until the dead is left alone, when they return to their horrid feast. The Parsee community appear to entertain this method in pre-

ference to committing the body to mother earth.

The latest improvement in Bombay is the tramway ; the cars are drawn by bullocks, with native driver and conductor. It was thought, when the enterprise was mooted, that a great objection to their construction was the Hindoo's entire subserviency to 'caste;' but of late years 'caste,' which had proved so great a curse to India, has been on the wane ; and although there is yet much superstition attached to the word, and although a high caste Brahmin would not deign, nor would he dare, touch the polluted hand of an infidel, a Mohamedan, or low caste Hindoo, still the dreaded Suttee, and other infamous Brahminical institutions, are for ever buried in oblivion, and even the sacredness of the Ganges is becoming doubtful to the sacerdotal Brahmins.

Leaving Bombay, our first stoppage was at

Kurrachee. A few hours were interestingly spent ashore; the harbour is some considerable distance from the town. The sacred tank of alligators repays one for the tedious walk; it was grievous to think that ignorant superstition at one time fed these reptiles with living human bodies.

Kurrachee can with justice boast of its Government Gardens and its library. This was the last place in which we saw the bustle and activity of daily labour: with British rule we left behind British industry.

One thing we saw in Kurrachee which deserves mention: that was an Eastern wedding. We were invited to witness the ceremonies by a brother of the bride. As we were being conducted towards the house, a number of females in white robes were noticeable, chanting a bridal song in a rather monotonous tone. On their entering the house, the door was immediately closed, and for some time we heard no more of these dusky damsels. The apart-

ment into which we were shown was closely adjoining those in which the ladies had disappeared. After patiently waiting some time, a loud shout was heard from outside, and it was interpreted to us, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh!' The outer-door was thrown open, and, with great obsequiousness, the happy man was welcomed by the friends of the bride.

We were then all admitted to partake of the marriage feast, which occupied about an hour, after which some inaudible words were uttered by the priest, a number of lamps were lighted, and with loud shouts the bride was led out, and, seated on a richly-caparisoned white horse, the procession then marched towards the bridegroom's house, into which no guests were allowed.

Leaving Kurrachee, we experienced stormy weather for some days, until nearing Jask (Beloochistan). At this place each passenger was served with rifle and bayonet. On our

inquiring the reason of this sudden armament, we were informed by the captain that a steamer, not long ago, had been attacked by Arab pirates, near Muscat, and robbed of all its cargo.

Fortunately we had no use for the weapons of so provident a company. Our steamer anchored off Bushire on the 11th of June, and it was a consolation to think that we had at last completed our travels by water. The journey had become a tedious one, but as we looked forward to the long march on horseback we planned out for ourselves various amusements for the way.

As an introduction to the country Bushire would be the worst spot to choose. It appeared, to our eyes, merely a collection of mud huts, and on entering the town itself our opinions of its beauties were not in any way enhanced on seeing the streets. The only notable building in Bushire is the British Residency, built purely in the Oriental fashion.

The streets of Bushire—as in fact all streets in Persia are—are extremely narrow, filthy, and irregular. The outer portion of the town still bears evidence to the severe shaking it sustained from the British war-vessels in 1856. A gunboat is stationed a short distance from the harbour—if such it may be called—in order, I presume, to protect 'British interests,' or *vice versâ*.

Bushire, although Persian, is under the entire control of the British Resident—the native Governor would not think of acting contrary to the wishes of the English Sahib. The internal as well as foreign affairs come under the notice of Colonel Ross, who is represented in the provinces by natives in the pay of the English Government. In fact, Southern Persia might be said to be indirectly under English rule; the power of the Resident is recognised by all parties. The Bushirees themselves imagine that England's power is all but paramount in Persia. The inspired fear which is instilled

into them arises perhaps from Colonel Ross's bodyguard, consisting of about a dozen Bombay Lancers, who take duty in and about the Residency; the close proximity also of the English guns may add in no small degree to their fears.

CHAPTER III.

Native Craftiness.—Modes of travelling in Persia.—'Kajava and Takhtravan.'—'Chapparing.'—Anything your heart may desire.—Leaving Bushire.—Ahmedy.—Caravanserais.—Borasjoon.—Anglo-Persian Battle-field.—Women Soldiers.—Daliki.—Blood-feuds.—Robber-guards.—Kazeroon Orange-groves.—The Maiden and Old Woman Passes.—Dashtarjin.—The Lion Haunt.—Sergt.-Major Collins.—Shiraz.

WE were detained some days in Bushire; the mules, we were told, were out *grazing*, and would not return to the town for ten or a dozen days, and although desirous of resuming our travels as early as possible, we were compelled to accept the news and be satisfied; although, as I afterwards experienced, had we offered a much higher price

for the animals, they would in a short time have been ready and loaded for the journey.

The mode, or rather modes, for there are two, of travelling in Persia, are greatly different from the Indian system of locomotion.

Travelling caravan necessitates the traveller hiring as many mules or camels as he may deem sufficient for himself, servants, and baggage; the hire of each mule per diem equals about two shillings. The caravan travels on an average about thirty miles a day, from stage to stage. The 'yaboos,' or native caravan-horses, may not be quite so good-looking as might be wished, but their sure-footedness and powers of endurance over rough and intricate roads are certainly astonishing. The riding day by day on these ill-fed and half-starved animals is wearisome in the extreme. One may jog along at the regulation three miles an hour, sunrise to sunset, having nothing but hills and sand for the eye to rest upon, being continually surrounded by sand-flies, and, per-

chance, flies of a larger kind. For invalids or ladies there is the 'kajava,' and in some parts of the country, less mountainous than others, there is the 'takhtravan.' The 'kajava' is formed of two small wooden boxes slung across the backs of the mules and tied securely underneath ; one person on either side must ride, in order to balance the kajava.

One unaccustomed to sitting *à la mode de Perse* (cross-legged) would find kajava travelling more wearisome than horseback, although in the 'kajava' the lady is screened from the sun's fierceness, and may, if undisturbed by mosquitoes, take a comfortable nap *en route*. Should the mule stumble, the kajava certainly comes to grief, as also does the terrified occupants. It is a most uncomfortable position to travel.

The 'takhtravan' is carried by two mules or camels, something after the fashion of the antequated sedan-chair. It is built of wood, having a slight roof to protect the traveller

from the extreme heat, or, if in winter, the rain or snow; two long poles project at either side, one mule being harnessed in front and one behind. It is generally about seven feet long, enabling the occupants to sit or lie down at their pleasure. When fitted up inside with laafs (rugs) and pillows, it forms an agreeable and easy mode of conveyance. The mountains of Southern Persia, from Bushire to Shiraz, will not permit of this carriage being used, the roads being, in most places, too rugged and precipitous.

The other mode, viz., 'chapparing,' is the old post-horse system: the traveller hires each horse—he may require three—at a cost of eight pence per farsack (four miles). He will ride on at a steady gallop the whole distance to the next station, where he will find other horses in readiness. The stages vary in distance from sixteen to twenty-four miles. In this way a hundred miles per day may be ridden by a tolerably good rider.

In some instances it has been known that officers of the Indo-European Telegraph have ridden over two hundred in the twenty-four hours. This, under an almost unbearable sun, across sandy plains, through mountain passes, is a feat worthy of comparison with 'Pesth to Paris in a fortnight.'

At every 'chapar khaneh' (post-house) a bowl of tea and a 'nargileh' (the Persian pipes are called 'kalyuns') will be obtainable. Indeed, unless the truthfulness of the post-house-keeper is doubted, anything from a dish of rich pillau to a dried fig may be had. On arriving at a chapar khaneh I have frequently inquired what he (the keeper) possessed in the way of eatables. The invariable reply was: 'Anything your heart may desire.' If, however, a requisition for milk or meat is made, the man will be your sacrifice; he is sorry, his heart aches to say he has neither. He will still aver that the 'sahib' can have 'anything his heart may desire'; but, until dates, tea, curdled-

milk, and a kalyun are asked for, his heart will still ache. As soon as the latter are mentioned, his dark visage suddenly lightens up with a smile, and his often-muttered 'Chashm, chashm!' ('On my eyes be it!') shows his eagerness to be of service,—the goal of his ambition, however, not being to give his obsequious attention gratis, but in his imaginative mind he sees, as his reward, a kran (tenpence) glittering in his hand; and, on the traveller's departure, the extended palms, and the 'May God be with you, sahib!' are indicative of his expectations.

Between Shiraz and Bushire caravan-travelling reigns supreme, the road being too mountainous for post-horses.

On June 11th the negotiations for mule-hire were completed, and we were busily preparing for our ride through Persia. We were surprised on hearing that everything in the way of provisions must be taken from Bushire—the caravanserais are entirely desti-

tute of even the meanest article either of food or furniture. Fortunately I was prepared for a rough journey ; I had camp-stools, bed, and table. We gave our head servant a list of what was required (which we learnt from the Residency), and the following day all was in readiness for our departure.

About two hours after sunset, amid the jingling of the everlasting bells which are tied around the mule's necks, we rode forth from the city gates, accompanied by a few Europeans. We parted company some half dozen miles from the city, and again turned our horses northwards; we were travelling over a salt plain some thirty miles in extent.

After riding for upwards of four hours we asked if the caravanserai was far distant, and were told that a few miles yet and we should be there. Towards morning we saw with no small degree of pleasure a light not far away, which proved to be the caravanserai for which we had been longing. We had put twenty-

six miles between Bushire and ourselves, and here we finished our first night's ride through the land of the sun.

These caravanserais are built for the purpose of affording rest and shelter to travellers; sometimes they are situated in or near a village; others are built in more remote places. At a distance they have the appearance of a fortified castle, but on a closer inspection the idea vanishes on seeing that no second wall appears.

Inside the wall is a large square in which the camels, horses, etc., are fed, and all around are small rooms for the travellers' accommodation. At the extreme end are the stables in which the animals are lodged, or in which the poorer people find refuge. It was in such a place as this the 'Lowly Nazarene' was born, the apartments of the caravanserai were entirely filled with pilgrims going to Jerusalem, so that Joseph and his wife, with no doubt many others, were glad to find rest in the

despised stables of the public rest house. The entrance to each room is a small opening scarcely large enough for a man to enter; the room itself is about ten feet long and five wide; in the centre a large hole is dug, which is intended for the fireplace, when such is needed. A small hole in the roof carries away the offensive vapours from the charcoal. Some caravanserais are miserably wretched, the rooms being altogether unfit for occupation; the walls reek with filth, and nauseous smells compel one to beat a hasty retreat. In the hot season the roof affords a more pleasant resting-place than the lower part of the building.

We left Ahmedi (our first halting-place) soon after sunrise for Borasjoon, a telegraph station. The road was a continuation of the salt marsh spoken of, uninteresting and dreary. Here and there were a few palm-trees, which in a way enlivened the scene. We arrived at this second stage shortly after noon, half-roasted. A good-sized water-melon was refreshing after our hot march.

Not far from Borasjoon is the solitary Anglo-Persian battlefield, memorable by the flight of the whole Persian army in 1856 before a mere handful of Highlanders and Sepoys. A most vivid recollection of this event is still entertained by a great many Persians; the subject is still an important one in the bazaars—how England sent women to fight the Persians; the great similarity of dress between the Scotch Highlanders and the Persian ladies accounting for this belief.

One old pensioner, in speaking of the battle, said: 'If women could fight as *they* did, what would the men be like?' They did not suffer themselves to more closely notice the faces of their foe, or the illusion would have been but short-lived.

Leaving Borasjoon for Daliki, the road grows more interesting. On approaching the latter place date plantations tend to Orientalize the scene. Naphtha springs abound around Daliki, but the revenue derived from this source

is not great, amounting to about £700 sterling annually.

The heat at Daliki is greater than in any other part of Persia. The night we rested there, our thermometer showed at sunset in the shade 116° Fahrenheit, and with mosquitoes and sand-flies combined, sleep was impossible. The long night was one of torture. Not one moment would these indefatigable insects pause in their unappeasable thirst for blood; but as every night must have its dawn, so with the one at Daliki. With the daylight we departed, with faces and hands blotched by the venomous bites of the date mosquito.

At this point commences the ascent of the grand plateau or table-land of Persia. The first mountain pass after leaving the nest of insects is called Kothal Malu, rising over two thousand feet; it is extremely difficult to ascend, owing to the many zigzag paths and deep ravines. The guards who accompanied us from Daliki would not proceed beyond a

certain spot, a blood feud existing between the people of Daliki and Khist (the next village).

These feuds are of common occurrence, originating frequently in a petty quarrel between two men of different villages, perhaps over a piece of land having been sown on beyond the boundary, or some other equally trivial occurrence. The quarrel at last ends in bloodshed, and from a family feud it very often spreads throughout the villages, until no one dare leave the precincts of his own village.

Thus it was with the people of Daliki and Khist. The quarrel had arisen from a Dalikee having accidentally wounded a lamb belonging to a Khistee. We met the guards of the latter place a short distance further. They appeared to be aware of our coming, and saluted us with the usual salaam. A more ruffianish, cut-throat-looking band I have never seen—each man armed to the very teeth; matchlock gun, pistols, and a long ugly blade stuck carelessly in the girdle.

I did not for some time relish the idea of placing my back at the mercy of this formidable-looking band of robber-guards. They are not of one occupation; one day they will loot an unprotected caravan; the next they will with jealous care guard a traveller from whom they may expect a few coins.

On reaching the summit of this Kothal we entered the valley of Khist, dotted here and there with a date plantation. The valley is very fertile, rich and abundant crops of cotton, opium, and tobacco being gathered twice and sometimes three times a year. At the opposite extremity of the Khist valley the second pass is entered. This second Kothal is named Kimarij, from a village of that name being situated near the summit. To the left of this pass is an unusually deep ravine, the path at its widest part not being over five feet. After the toilsome ascent of Kothal Kimarij comes the fertile plain of Kazeroon, one of the largest and most richly covered plains in Persia.

Our march from Kimarij to Kazeroon was in the night time; the moon, fortunately, was almost a full one, and its light, such as is but seen in the East, shone like a living flame on the many groves of palm and orange-trees which are dotted about the plain. The night was wondrously beauteous, resplendent in its glorious light, and as we neared the small town of Kazeroon, situated in the midst of orange-gardens, the silvery notes of the bulbul (nightingale) fell upon our ears; and we wondered whether Saadi, the Persian Milton, had thought of this lovely spot when he spoke so enthusiastically of the rosy bowers of Rustumabad.

We had seen on the plain several shepherds tending their flocks, and my mind quickly reverted to the scene which took place over 1800 years ago, when the astonished shepherds saw the heavenly host appearing, praising God and bringing peace to all men. We could easily imagine a similar scene on this calm, serene night.

In Kazeroon is another station of the Indian Government Telegraphs. The town is built in the centre of the plain. Leaving this place for Myun Kothal, about twenty-six miles distant, we ascend the third pass, or Kothal Dukhta, some 1100 feet high. From the base of this mountain it appears totally inaccessible; the rock is almost perpendicular; the ascent is made much easier by steps roughly cut from the rock, which wind zigzag to the top. It is the most difficult pass in Persia for transport.

We were stopped two or three times in our ascent by caravans journeying in the opposite direction to ourselves. We were glad to find any crevice large enough to shield us from broken limbs. A more dangerous passage I never saw. The width of the path could not be more than six feet; on one side a yawning gulf, and on the other a terrible wall of stone. One slip would be fatal. Fortunately, however, no slip occurred.

On a subsequent journey downwards the danger was more apparent than in the darkness of night, when I first saw the pass. The road at the top of the 'Dukhtar' runs through the Dasht-i-bar or Oak Valley, which is eleven miles in length. In this wild spot the wolf, jackal, bear and wild cat find refuge from whatever may assail them, and sometimes may be heard the lion's thundering roar. The journey from Kazeroon is a most fatiguing one, and we were not sorry to see the weird walls of the Myun Kothal caravanserai rising up before us.

The caravanserai, as its name signifies, is built at the centre of the Kothal Pir-i-zan, and commands a sight the most picturesque throughout Persia. In the background is a mighty chain of hills towering high above us, and covered with most luxuriant foliage of the dwarf oak; far away in front runs the majestic range of mountains extending to the borders of Beloochistan; and on each side the

oak valley, in the lovely garb of early summer, gives to the scene exquisite beauty.

The Kothal Dukhtar signifies the Maiden's or Daughter's pass; Pir-i-zan, the Old Woman. The Persians say that these Quixotic names were given to the two passes on account of the Dukhtar being so extremely difficult and laborious of ascent, through the narrowness of the road and the falling stones. Having accomplished this arduous and perilous mount, the Pir-i-zan is more easily ascended. Mules and camels often come to grief whilst slowly descending the cruel and wearisome steps of the former pass, whilst on the Pir-i-zan the caravan is usually deserted by most of the muleteers, who find a better path for themselves.

It was with a shade of regret, seldom experienced when travelling in Persia, that we left this rude hotel of the Myun Kothal, although we had been disturbed frequently during the night by the unearthly cries of the

jackals and hyena, which were prowling about not many yards from our tent.' Yet the singular beauty of the landscape had some peculiar charms, and it was with reluctance we crossed the brow of the hill which hid the valley and the caravanserai from our sight.

Leaving the Pir-i-zan, we entered the plain of Dasht-i-argin, 'the field of wild almonds;' this place is held in great dread by all who pass it, having a terrible reputation as 'the haunt of the lion.' The plain is some fifteen miles in length and six wide. At the southern extremity is a deep morass where herds of wild pigs find an almost uninterrupted settlement. At times they are disturbed by the 'Shikaris'' (native hunter's) spear, or the more certain bullets of the European; sometimes perchance by a hungry and starved lion.

At the northern corner of the plain the village of Dasht-i-argin is situated; it is, however, mostly in ruins, and many gravestones

near the village bear rude inscriptions of men who have been killed by lions in or near the plain. A short distance from the village, on an elevated piece of land close by the caravan-track, is a Government Telegraph Station (I was afterwards stationed at this place for nine months), built in the fashion of a Waldensian church of the ninth century; it might have been built to resist the onslaught of fever of a most malignant type, which emanates from the morass, and is severely felt during the hot months of summer. Mosquitoes and sand-flies of unusual development appear to thrive in this fever-stricken air.

There was a good deal of correspondence between the Indian Government and the local director respecting a station being built in so unhealthy a spot, but eventually the Government, with their irrefragable 'must have,' won the day, and the station was erected, but, combining the three grievances of fever, mosquitoes, and solitude together. Dasht-i-argin is

not an enviable place of abode. The winter is very severe, the roads being completely blocked from December to February.

Leaving this abode of the most formidable of the carnivorous animals, the road is due north to Shiraz; the most part is a sandy plain; one or two small hamlets lie *en route*. Some twelve miles from our last halting-place, and near the road, is a post erected on the spot where a brave non-commissioned officer of Engineers (Sergt.-Major Collins) fell bravely defending his life.

He was attacked by a party of mounted robbers, who, after entirely looting his caravan, attempted to lay hold of Mrs. Collins's horse. The villain who thus gave the signal for a fight paid dearly for his bravado; a bullet crashed through his skull at the moment he touched the bridle; shots were then sharply exchanged, and after three robbers biting the dust, poor Collins fell, shot through the head by a treacherous foe, who had stealthily crept

up behind, and thus with careful aim sent the merciless bullet which ended the life of a brave soldier and a true comrade.

Sergt. Collins was the first man who sprang on the walls of Pekin in the Chinese war. His body was horribly mutilated by these fiends, who, however, received the due merit of their atrocious deed. Two of the band were crucified, and two others were built up alive in lime. Sergt. Collins' servants proved how much may be relied on Persian protestations of fidelity and bravery, by perfidiously deserting him at the critical moment, when the presence of a strong bodyguard would have commanded a safe passage.

A short time after sunrise we reached the suburbs of Shiraz, and were warmly welcomed by the few Europeans resident there. Here we received orders to report for duty, and not to proceed further northwards, as previously instructed. We had already been travelling by sea and land over two months, and were not

sorry to finish the journey and settle down to our new life. Two days after, however, Mr. Jefferies received fresh orders to leave at once for Ispahan.

I remember on one occasion, whilst at Shiraz, being visited by a Persian of high rank, who had a short time previously received a paralytic stroke in his left shoulder and arm. After numerous inquiries as to my own state of health, and the usual flow of meaningless complimentary language, the man asked if I could, by the aid of our invisible fire (electricity) render him any benefit, as he had heard in India that in England we had magicians who, by the powerful assistance of this fire, could cure all manner of diseases.

I replied that its fame as a curative power was certainly great, but in this case it had been too much exaggerated. Yet if he chose I could write to the officer in charge of the station, who would doubtless be glad of the

chance to experimentalize on the too-trustful victim.

Armed with my note, he courteously bade me adieu, and with his retinue proceeded towards the Telegraph Office. The scene strongly reminded one of the command given to Naaman by the Israelitish prophet.

My curiosity being aroused, I followed the man, who was an influential person in the governor's palace (a Sirteep). On arriving at the office I spoke with the chief officer, and explained the case. He laughingly consented to the trial, and at once commenced his preparations.

A most powerful battery of 'Menotti' cells had just been prepared, and was soon ready for the operation. To the two poles of the battery a copper wire was attached, and at the extremity of each wire a large sponge damped for the purpose. One was given to the 'Sirteep,' who was instructed to tightly grasp the sponge in the paralysed arm. He

timidly complied, and was astonished to feel no sensation; but as patience usually rewards those who practise that virtue, so I told the Sirteep he would most undoubtedly receive a just recompense for waiting. The other sponge being now affixed, I cautioned the paralytic to prepare himself.

In a moment I clapped the sponge on the man's shoulder. The result was instantaneous. The terrified man with a leap and a yell bounded forward, and before we recovered from our fit of laughter the room was entirely clear of Sirteep and servants.

One application had proved sufficient; the awful look on the man's face, the affrighted yell and the bound, which was as quick as the lightning flash which had caused it, will ever be remembered by those who witnessed it. For some minutes we reeled, as if intoxicated, with unsuppressed laughter.

By the next day the bazaars were full of commentators on the violent shock given to

the Sirteep, which, however, effected a partial cure. A second and third dose of lightning would probably have had the desired result, but never again would the man speak of the 'invisible fire.'

Several times afterwards, on meeting him and inquiring as to the state of his health, whether he would like another shock, he mournfully shook his head, declaring that all the stars of the universe were plainly visible to him during that terrible moment.

Once or twice on visiting the Telegraph Office our friend the Sirteep would look with wondering awe at the 'fire machines,' but never a word would he utter. He probably thought that it is quite possible to have too much of a good thing.

CHAPTER IV.

Shiraz.—Sanitary arrangements.—Nomadic Tribes.—Persian Education and Virtues.—Religion.—'Hajee.'—Advent of the Moslem Prophet.—Origin of Islamism.—Sunnies' and Shahies' Disputes.—Climate of Persia.—Products.—Garden-parties.—Persian Dinner-parties.—Lack of Female Society.

SHIRAZ is one of the largest cities of Persia, and is the capital of Farsistan. It is about six hundred miles S.E. of Teheran, and is situated in a most fertile plain, entirely surrounded by high mountains. It is chiefly famous for its carpets, gardens, and mosaic work. It is also the burial-place of two of Persia's most eminent poets, Saadi and Hafiz. The population is upwards of fifty thousand, including Jews, Armenians, and Arabs. The streets, like

Bushire, are exceedingly narrow and irregular; nothing but blank mud walls are to be seen, which vary from six to thirteen feet high, and are entered by small, low-built doors. Large doors proclaim wealthy inmates, and this is one thing in Persia which must be kept secret. A firman from the king of kings at Teheran might summon the too-trustful owner to the royal stirrup, from whence, under such circumstances, there would in all probability be no return.

The town is surrounded by a wall, the greater part of which is entirely in ruins. The gates are closed at sunset, no person being admitted unless in possession of the necessary password. The streets during the summer months emit fetid odours, arising from the entire absence of sanitary arrangements. The refuse of each house is thrown indiscriminately before the doorway. No notice is taken of the accumulation of so rank a nuisance until the road becomes impassable;

it may then be removed to some less-frequented place until some pestilential epidemic brings it to the notice of the authorities.

In winter the nuisance exists in but a worse condition. The snow is shovelled from off the roofs of the houses into the streets below, and this, combined with the continuous filthiness, impregnates the atmosphere with putrid fumes, which carry disease and death in every direction. In the capital itself no precautions are taken to avoid the dreaded plague which periodically visits the more thickly populated towns of Persia.

Sanitary boards are as yet unknown by the subjects of the Shah, and à Persian depositing the rubbish of his house in the street adjacent imagines he has fulfilled all that is required of him, either by law or decency.

The great majority of the population of Persia is composed of wandering and lawless tribes, such as Turcomans, Arabs, Eelyants, etc.; nothing definite is known as to their

numbers. They acknowledge no king, and many tribes pay no taxes. They have no records of their antecedents or their numbers. Each tribe has a *patois* of its own, very similar to the Persian language.

Their wealth consists principally in horses, camels, goats, etc. Their chief occupation is in making carpets, some of which are of the finest in Persia. Each family owns a tent (the value is about four tomans, or one pound ten shillings) made of camels' hair.

The tent is erected by a stout pole in the centre, the sides being fastened to the ground by wooden spikes. They usually encamp in thirty or forty tents. Their domestic expenses are but slight: they make their own butter, bread, and charcoal. Dates are plentiful, and this is all they require.

The Persian education consists chiefly of a knowledge of reading and writing their own language and the Koran; this is considered a great accomplishment. They grow up re-

ligiously superstitious, and utterly ignorant of subjects beyond their everyday life; believing in Mahomed as the great prophet and intercessor for man's guilt, placing implicit trust in the absurd writings and pretended revelations of the cleverest impostor the world has known.

They hold in great veneration the name of the Virgin Mary (called in Arabic Marian). They also believe in our Saviour as a great prophet, but second in adoration.

Their great faults are in the wants of honesty, truthfulness, and other similar virtues; these they are totally unacquainted with, and a falsehood is considered, in Persia, more a virtue than a crime.

I do not hesitate in stating that there is no country in the world where truth is held in such a low estimation as in Persia. It is inherent with them; from the king to the lowest fakir there is scarcely a single man worthy of trust. They are brought up in this systematic style of falsity. It is even practised when

sensible of being wrong; and they will vehemently vouch for the veracity of their statements in a thousand different ways. 'By your life!' 'By the soul of God!' and 'By the Prophet's beard!' being the first assurances of the truthfulness of their utterances. This pernicious method of thoughtless oath-taking is not considered irreligious in the land of the Medes and Persians.

They bear a bitter hatred towards all Christians; and the cry is now, as of old, wherever they dare to raise it, 'The Koran or the sword!' The belief is still prevalent as ever, that the surest passport to heaven is attained if an infidel dog dies by the hand of a true believer.

The Persian, like the Turk and other Mahomedans of either sect, aspires to the title of 'Hajee,' and to gain this will undertake the long dreary journey to the holy city Mecca; and after seeing the great temple of God, and possessing himself of a piece of the sacred

clay, he believes he has performed the most sacred duty and obligation enjoined upon him by Ali and other successors of Mahomed.

The name thus conferred upon the pilgrims to Mecca affords greater inducement for the journey than does its sacredness, and were it not for the many privileges to which 'Hajee' entitles them, and the rank which the pilgrim may assume on his return, very few would visit the holiest of holies.

Their religion is a compulsory one, and were it not for this fact, I fully believe that not one half of the population would proclaim themselves followers of the fictitious doctrines of Mahomed; but the violation of the prescribed religious laws, or favouring the views of Christianity, is followed by an ignominious death.

The moolahs (priests) are generally in some way connected with the supposed family of Mahomed, and truly speaking, it is they who govern Persia. The king's first counsellor is

the high priest of Teheran. Should this moolah order a man's death, no one would dare oppose it. The influence of this class of men is powerfully felt in the realms of the Shah. A priest may, by uttering a few words from the Koran, either arouse the fiery and animal-like passion of his hearers, or subdue any tumultuous gathering or fanatical outburst.

The Government of Persia is a despotic one, everything being under the absolute power of a barbarously tyrannical king, who is invariably ruled by a detestable priesthood.

Mahomed, the founder of the doctrine of Islamism, was born at Mecca, in Arabia, A.D. 574; and, according to the writings of the Persian poet and historian, Hafiz, was a direct descendant of Ishmael, the son of Abraham. His illustrious advent into this wicked world was, it is said, signalised by mighty miracles: the great river Tigris overflowed its banks—the Guebres' sacred fire was extinguished—and the stars were transformed to a dazzling

splendour; and, as if to expiate for the innumerable sins of his unworthy ancestors, his first earthly act was to devoutly fall upon his knees and solemnly devote his whole life to the will and service of the great Allah. A thousand such absurdities could be written, attendant upon the early life of the greatest impostor history has known, all of which only tend to prove the utter worthlessness of the so-called divine Koran.

It has been contended, by eminent scholars of our time, that Mahomed's mission was divinely appointed by an Almighty wisdom and foresight, yet we cannot accept such imaginations as correct, when we think of the many deceitful, bloodstained practices which were but of too common an occurrence with the Moslem Prophet—how thousands of those who dared oppose him were ruthlessly put to the sword—of the infamous laws which still exist in countries where the religion of Mahomed flourishes. These do not bear comparison with

the sublime laws of peace and goodwill which our Saviour strove to inculcate into the hearts of the proud Jewish people. One thing is certain: Mahomed, in his true character, was more suited to the minds and anticipations of the Eastern world than was the lowly-born Nazarene, who, in His beautiful teachings, His holy examples, shameful death, and glorious resurrection, will eventually triumph over all the superstitious idolatry of Mahomedanism, Paganism, or Romanism.

The pretended revelations received by Mahomed from the angel Gabriel were written on skins and leaves, and were treasured up by his immediate successors, Abubekr, Omar, and Ali; they were formed into a single volume by a Khalif of Baghdad, and have since remained intact under the name of 'Al Koran,' which is held by all devout Mussulmans as a divine revelation of Allah's wishes to man. It is written in an elegant and flowing style of language, than which nothing could be more

suitable to the Oriental, whose fascinated mind holds it in the highest admiration and awe. When reading the Koran, or listening to its flowery strain, the sparkling orbs and muttered utterances of praise prove how the Arab's heart is held enraptured by its wonderful charms.

The religion of Islam consists of six great laws: (1) the belief in the true God—'There is no God but God, and Mahomed is his prophet;' (2) fasting as required in the months Moharrum and Ramazan; (3) relief of the oppressed; (4) a strict compliance to Mahomed's prescribed prayers; (5) pilgrimage to the tombs of the prophets and the seven Imaums; and (6) a close observance of the laws of cleanliness as regards unbelievers. There are various minor laws relating to the way in which a true believer shall live, etc.

They have an implicit faith, or rather belief, in the existence of one supreme, omnipresent, omniscient God, and that through him all

things have their being: he creates and destroys; and, in fact, that every virtue and all perfections emanate from God. They also believe that Allah leads them astray in order to test their faith, and that everything good or evil, virtuous or vicious, must of necessity be willed by the great Allah. Indeed, their religion throughout is one of fatalism.

The Koran also commands a most rigorous obedience to the laws of purification, washing of hands before and after eating, total abstinence from all intoxicants, shaving of the head, praying with uncovered feet, facing towards Mecca, preservation of the beard, and other similar hypocritical enforcements.

There are two great sects of Islamism—the Sunnis (Turks, Arabs, and Indian Mussulmans) and Shahies (Persians, Turcomans, Khurds); the greatest and most powerful of the two are the Sunnis. The reason of this division is that on the death of Mahomed, two parties claimed the succession, the Prophet having ex-

pired without naming one. The claimants were Abubekr, father-in-law of Mahomed, and Ali, the nephew of the Prophet. For some days the office of leadership was fiercely contested, but eventually Abubekr was unanimously elected Khalif.

His reign, however, was but of short duration. On his death, Omar was appointed his successor—a cruel and relentless tyrant, his motto being, 'Death to all unbelievers!'—and bitterly did he carry out his doctrine. He and the following Khalif (Othman), were assassinated by fanatical factionists, when Ali was proclaimed vicar-elect.

Mahomedanism, at this juncture of its history, had acquired renewed vigour. The Arabs were enthusiastic in their zeal to conquer, believing in Mahomed's words that Paradise was hidden behind the sword. The khalifate was disputed by Mowiyā, an Arab chieftain, and several severely contested engagements resulted, but a decision was never

arrived at. Ali was murdered by one of his own soldiers; and the khalifate was held by members of the different sects, until it was finally wrecked, the high office of Imaum-i-Jumma (high-priest) being one of election.

The Shahies, especially the Persians, believe that Mahomed, just before his death, actually nominated Ali as his successor; but the wife of the prophet was Ali's greatest enemy, and took an oath that Abubekr was the lawfully nominated Khalif.

The Shahies declare the three first Khalifs usurpers, and some even assert a divine election for Ali, prior to Mahomed's mission; but through some misrepresentation, the divine commands were given to Mahomed by the angel Gabriel. After Ali's death the two families successively reigned, and the diversion of opinion has never changed.

Ali is idolized by the Persians, whilst Omar is the whole-absorbing name in the mind of the Turk. Bitter jealousies still exist between the

two parties, although Islamism has lost its vitality and is fast crumbling into a thing of the past.

Shah Abbas of Persia had engraved upon his seal, as a description of himself 'The meanest dog of Ali.' Pilgrimages are yearly made to the tomb of Ali and the twelve Imaums. In the month Moharrum the death of Houssein, Ali's son, who was murdered by the Sunnis, is celebrated with unusual splendour and pomp in Persia and India.

The climate of Persia is to a great extent regulated by the situation of the town or village—if sheltered by high snow-crowned hills, or if exposed to the dry arid winds from some vast expanse of sand. There are but few rivers of consequence, and even these are in some cases dried up during the summer months.

Northern Persia is subject to the extreme Caspian cold in winter, and the unhealthy desert winds in summer. Southern Persia

has the gulf monsoons and heavy rain, and in summer is much hotter than any other portion of the country. The heat at Bushire during July and August is almost inexpressible.

The products of the country are tobacco, opium, maize, castor oil, cotton, barley, and dates. Two crops are yearly gathered. There are hundreds of miles, however, totally unproductive. Cultivation is unknown except near the most principal towns and villages.

Fruit of all kinds in abundance may be had at Shiraz, Ispahan and Teheram. The grapes and melons at Ispahan are unequalled in any other part of Asia, a bunch of grapes I have seen weighing over twelve pounds.

Europeans are never in any way prevented visiting the gardens and making themselves at home with the fruit. The man in charge will expect something in the way of baksheesh, and by placing half a kran (fivepence) in his hand, he would be made to forget all his domestic troubles for the next twenty-four hours. The

numerous blessings which would then be lavishly bestowed upon the 'noble head' of the donor would complete the bargain, and one would think the half kran not misspent.

Some of the gardens around Shiraz are beautifully laid out with fruit trees and flowers; the orange, pomegranate, citron, almond and fir trees are the most general.

The people of Shiraz and other places in Persia esteem it one of the first enjoyments of life to resort with a few friends or relations to one of these gardens, and beneath the widespread branches of the almond tree sip cup after cup of insipid sugary water.

The 'samovar,' imported from Russia, is as universal in a Persian house as is the common kettle of our English homes. It is something after the fashion of a good-sized tea-urn. Live charcoal is put down a small chimney in the centre of the urn; water is held in another partition around the fire, which is kept lighted

by an attendant or an inferior member of the family.

During my stay in Shiraz, I, with two or three other Europeans, was frequently invited by different khans to visit their gardens and partake of breakfast or dinner.

An Eastern meal is entirely different to the more ceremonious receptions and introductions attendant upon an accepted invitation to dinner in a Western country. Unfortunately, it lacks one thing which to an Englishman's idea is specially necessary to luminate the attractions: there is no lady of the house to whom we must first pay our salaams; a circle of olive-complexioned, long-bearded, solemn-faced men is the only thing we expect to see on our entrance to the festive hall.

Usually, a servant of the host is despatched to each invited guest to announce that everything is ready for our reception and that the master awaits our arrival. There is no powdered obsequious footman to loudly an-

nounce the name and rank of the in-goer. The doors are thrown open, and we unceremoniously pass in to where the assembled guests are sitting, who, on our entrance, immediately rise and return our salutation of 'Peace be unto you.'

The governor of the feast then points for us to take up seats at either side of himself, thus giving unto us the place of honour so much coveted by Orientals. The servants then produce an earthenware vessel, and water to wash our hands before eating.

This difficulty over, we take a survey of the eatables before us. All around the cloth, which is, of course, on the floor, are huge piles of 'nun,' or thin bread, and large dishes of steaming rice, prepared in a manner essentially Eastern.

We Europeans are granted the favour of a plate each, but all the rest dip their swarthy fingers in the same dish. No knives are to be seen, so we are obliged to settle down *à la mode de Persan.*

The host took a large nūn, and breaking it, passed a small piece to each one. As each morsel of bread was given to the guests; the word 'Bismillah!' ('In the name of God!') was devoutly uttered by the giver.

During the meal, the host, being desirous to make himself as polite and agreeable as possible, put his greasy fingers in the dish of curried meat, and after fishing for some time, picked out of the savoury mess a dainty morsel and offered it to the guest nearest him. Fortunately for myself, this punctilio of refinement was made to my friend of the opposite side, who dare not, in courtesy, refuse it, although it was accepted and swallowed with apparent aversion. This is considered in the East the very essence of politeness, and he who is thus honoured is greatly envied. The happy (!) recipient of this act of condescension must in return wish that the donor's shadow may never grow less, and that his star may ever be in the ascendancy.

During the meal, the black greasy fingers were busily employed in rolling small balls of rice, and with great dexterity throwing them into the capacious mouth, anxiously awaiting it. For upwards of an hour there was little said, but much eaten. After dinner we again washed our hands, and the coffee and inevitable Kalyun (pipe) were brought. As I have said, there were no ladies present with whom we could converse; but at intervals a silvery laugh from some adjoining apartment was heard, and once or twice we saw peeping from behind one of those Manchester-made curtains, of a pattern peculiar to the East, the dark eyes of some inquisitive beauty who evinced a longing desire to gaze upon the face of a Feringee.

CHAPTER V.

Condition and Habits of Persian Women.—Results of Polygamy.—Royal Contentions.—Assumption of Nasir-i-din.—'On the Road.'—Intense Cold of December.—Severe Snowstorms.—Footprints of a Lion.—Arrival of Visitors.—Native Life in Winter.—Miserable Condition of Peasants.—Village Magistrate's House.—Sevund.—Attacked by Fever.—Leave of Absence.—Yezd.—Persian Immorality.

THE condition of women in Persia and other Eastern countries is totally different to that of the accomplished ladies of Europe and the Western world. They cannot be called anything but slaves or menials. They are not called upon to share the joys and sorrows of their husband. A woman is merely held as an instrument or machine for her

owner. They are entirely destitute and ignorant of knowledge on spiritual matters—they are seldom premitted to enter the sacred precincts of a mosque; indeed, it is strongly affirmed in Persia that woman has no soul, and that their creation was intended solely for man's pleasure and caprice. They are apparently totally unconscious of a future state. Their chief amusements are in embroidery, needlework, smoking, and fantastically decorating themselves. Each woman vies in her endeavours to become the "khanoum,' or favourite, of the harem. The Persians greatly ridicule the European's ostentatious display of courtesy to a lady.

All harems are guarded by Ethiopian eunuchs, and no one but its master dare think of crossing its sacred threshold. Not even a brother is allowed to see his sisters unless the latter are closely veiled; and, at one time, such was the rigorousness of this abominable inhibition, that should a woman violate the

laws of the harem, and be discovered in conversation (unveiled) with her nearest relative, immediate death would follow—perhaps by suffocation or some other equally cruel method. The unnatural and degrading results of polygamy are nowhere more evident than in Persia.

The present king has one favourite son whose mother is the queen of the harem, and although not the eldest, has yet been designated as the heir-apparent (Veleyaat). There are several who have priority of birth, but this avails nothing, so long as the mother is an inferior wife; consequently, on the death of the Shah, there will doubtless be, as is usually the case, two or three parties, each in itself justified, claiming, and if necessary fighting, for the vacant throne. Indeed, the eldest son, Sultan Mazud Mirza, whose title is Zil-i-Sultan, the present Governor of Ispahan, has openly declared his intention to seize the throne on the death of his august father.

Some two years ago, on the Zil-i-Sultan receiving a renewal of his present appointment as Governor of the Province of Irak, he, in accordance with a prevailing custom, tendered his sword of office to the King at Teheran. The monarch, noticing an elaborate inscription on the bright blade, asked its meaning, and was told by his firstborn that its signification was 'The keenest edge wins the prize!' no doubt alluding to his declared intention above referred to.

He certainly is popular with the people, who would hail his ascension with pleasure. The peaceful assumption to power of the present Shah was brought about by the prompt and decisive action of the British ambassador.

Nasir-i-din was then Governor of Tabreez, (the Dukedom of Tabreez is hereditary to the crown prince, as is the Dukedom of Cornwall to the Prince of Wales) and on the death of his father, Mahomed Shah, which was kept

profoundly secret from the populace, an *attaché* from the English Legation rode post-haste to Tabreez, requested an immediate private audience of the Governor, and informed him of the demise of Mahomed Shah. Nasir-i-din at once returned with the *attaché* to Teheran, when it was publicly proclaimed that Mahomed Shah was no more, and that Nasir-i-din Shah reigned in his stead. Thus, by the laws of gratitude and friendship, Nasir-i-din should be lastingly bound in goodwill towards the power who, without bloodshed or tumult, raised him to his present exalted position as Lord of Lords and the Shadow of God and the Universe.

Since then, however, all provincial capitals are in direct telegraphic communication with Teheran, and it will prove exceedingly difficult to restrain the native manipulators from imparting the tidings to their distant compatriots, who will, of course, proclaim the fact *pro bono publico*. This would undoubtedly result

in each son marching towards the capital at the head of his own tribe, and might, perhaps, will conquer right. On the other hand, this may be prevented by the English Minister, who can stop such communications and take the matter under his own official charge. With the present Minister, however, this course is but dubious.

Such are the debasing results of polygamy, that brothers and the nearest members of families are alienated from each other, and are made bitter enemies. There can be no tender ties of the family circle in a country where this banefully destructive custom exists: affection is unknown, and the worst passions of man are aroused where all that is gentle and kind should reign.

In October, three months after my arrival in Shiraz, I was again 'on the road,' and once more travelling over the mountains I had crossed a short time before. I was engaged, until late in December, in repairing the section

of lines under my charge (from Shiraz to Kazeroon). The weather, a contrast to my last passing over the hills, was excessively cold. In some places under the line the snow had drifted to the depth of from ten to fifteen feet; on one occasion a somewhat serious interruption occurred on the Kothal Pir-i-zan. Myself and a party of native workmen started early in the morning to effect the necessary repairs; a severe snowstorm had been raging for the past two days, and the silvery wreaths were still falling thickly. It was with some difficulty that we and our horses managed to pick our way through the almost blinding flakes, and had it not been for the line of poles, the tops of which were just discernible, we should inevitably have lost our way.

At one time I was compelled to threaten the workmen, who were not Government *employés*, with severe punishment, and at last promise higher remuneration, to induce them to accompany me. I was wrapped up in two or

three thick blankets, until I had the appearance of some huge white animal scrambling as best it could through the almost impenetrable mass of crystallised snow, and with these I could not shake off the feeling of numbness which had spread over nearly the whole of my body.

It was beyond the range of possibility to attempt to ride. The horses were simply an encumbrance to our progress; several times we were obliged to halt to assist the poor brutes out of some treacherous slip. At the end of eight hours we had marched, or rather crawled, five miles. At last, almost in despair, we reached a ruined village at the foot of the Kothal, and there we passed the night.

It was some considerable time before I could in the least feel the benefit of a roaring pile of burning wood, which we had happily found in the shape of a few broken-down doors. Whether we had missed the fault on the line, or whether it was further south, was a question

not known or asked. The severity of the storm may perhaps be imagined : several gigantic oaks had been torn up by their roots ; an old caravanserai, near the village, had been completely devastated ; the village itself, in a ruinous condition, was now a mere heap of rubbish ; the hole—it could not be called a room—in which we found temporary shelter, was in imminent danger of being overthrown.

Little sleep was to be had ; the melting snow was pouring through the loose stones which at one time had formed the roof. At daybreak we resumed our cheerless journey, and after three or four hours' tedious marching we discovered the fault ; two iron poles had been uplifted by the storm and hurled over a dozen yards away. A little after noon the repairs were completed and communication restored, and by the use of portable instruments which I carried we had the satisfaction of learning from head-quarters that 'lines were right !'

We then pushed on to the Myun Kothal

caravanserai for our night's rest. Early the following morning we commenced our return to Dashtarjin. We did not experience the same difficulty as before; the storm had to a great extent subsided. A short distance from the village is a grove of almond-trees. As we passed the place, I noticed footprints in the snow, which on examination proved to belong to a good-sized lion; we saw by their distinctness that the marks had been but recently made. Had both parties met, and the monarch of the forest shown fight, the result might not have been a pleasant one. My only weapon was a Colt's heavy revolver, which would have proved comparatively useless, my hands being numbed with cold and covered with thick gloves, which I was afraid to unloose, and to have allowed one of the Persians to attempt a shot would have been fraught with equal danger to himself. I could not but feel thankful that the mighty king of beasts had passed on his way ignorant of our close proximity.

The station was reached just before sunset, and even this solitary spot appeared to me a cheerful sight, as I found my rudely furnished bungalow lighted by a goodly blaze; riding-boots, blankets, etc., could be dispensed with, and more than all, I could anticipate a good night's rest.

Similar interruptions and journeys found me occupation during the weary months of winter. Christmas was passed in the same solitary, earth-forsaken spot, having for my companions inside a few dusky Persian servants, whose only delight appeared to be akin to that of the dormouse: the extreme cold had such an affect upon them that it was seldom they were awake; and outside, wild beasts of almost every kind.

The monotonous routine of my daily existence was but once broken, by the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Arnold, who were at this unseasonable time making a tour of the country. After being isolated from European society for more than five months, it is scarcely necessary to say with

what degree of pleasure and joy I hailed the arrival of this lady and gentleman, who remained my guests two days. They appeared surprised to find me alone in such a cheerless region, and expressed their unconcealed disapproval of such a life being required by the Indian Government.

The words 'Good-bye!' were most reluctantly spoken, as I raised my hat when we parted, as a last farewell. I had accompanied them a few miles on their homeward journey, and as I returned to my lonely abode, my spirits were not of the most lively kind.

During these terrible months of frost and snow it is astonishing by what means the wretched inhabitants of such villages as Dashtarjin find sustenance. Their food is chiefly bread made from acorns and dried dates, a little goat's milk, and sometimes rice. The bread is of a most miserable, unpalatable kind; it is extremely bitter, about the thickness of cowhide.

From November to March these poor villagers are compelled to live as best they can. They remain shut up in a room, perhaps two yards square, frequently without fire, and inadequately supplied with clothes.

Bedding requisites being a thing altogether unknown, the severities of winter come upon them most keenly, and in every village a great number annually succumb and die of starvation in their own homes. During the whole of those five months I may without hesitation affirm that not one man or woman living in these places knows the delight of clean linen. As they dress at the commencement of the winter, so they may be found at its close : not one particle of clothing ever changed, night or day.

In most cases the goats, cows, and fowls are sheltered beneath the same roof as the family. On visiting these wretched huts, sometimes, I have turned away from such sights with unutterable loathing—not through any degree

of contempt at the great difference which exists between the luxuries of a European resident and these miserable beings, but because of the abhorrent stench, which is almost sufficient to suffocate one unused to such fetidness, and of the terrible lowness to which human beings descend.

Their condition is far worse than it is possible to describe.

I visited one village in company with two United States generals who were passing through Persia, and the sight which met our gaze on entering the somewhat spacious room of the khetkhoda, or chief of the village, almost defies description.

In one corner of the room were two or three small children and a couple of dirty ugly women, who were fearful lest the infidel Feringee should catch a glimpse of their interesting physiognomies. In an opposite corner were grouped together some half-dozen goats and one or two cows, whilst above these sat a few winged animals. In the centre of

the apartment were a few smouldering embers, the fumes of which yet filled the room. In another part we noticed several rude implements used by the Persians in tilling the land, and a few articles of the *cuisine* lay strewed about the floor. The odour in the room was not a pleasant one, which greatly curtailed our visit.

At the entrance to this wretched abode stood a group of shivering villagers (it was February), who were lost in wonderment as to why these Feringees should visit their settlement.

The gentlemen with whom I was travelling said that during the whole of their travels in the Far West, in Australia and China, they had never witnessed such a degree of misery as was exhibited in this Persian village.

A few days after my return from Shiraz, to which place I had escorted the American officers, I received an invitation from the khetkhoda, or governor, of Dashtarjin to wit-

ness the marriage festivities of his eldest son, a lad of some sixteen summers. The old governor, a man of solid appearance, brought the invitation *en personne;* he was accompanied by a few of the principal villagers, whose black orbs beamed with curiosity as they wandered from one object to another in my cosy little bungalow. An English clock, my rifle, and a few pictures hanging on the mud walls, were themes of hushed conversation. A large medicine chest and the telegraphic apparatus were, to their affrighted minds, objects of mystic majesty.

One more courageous than the rest, yet with apparent timidity, crossed the room to where the apparatus stood, and cautiously examined the screws and brass-work of the battery connections. Emboldened by success, he ventured with both hands to more minutely prosecute his search after knowledge; for some time he studiously avoided touching more than one terminal; at last, however, thinking probably

that he had become considerably advanced in the science of electricity, he grasped, with both hands, the two screws from whence flows the electric current; a sudden yell from the pursuer of knowledge, and a burst of laughter from me, were the next items of the programme. The man, rather crestfallen, resumed his seat, and in an awestricken tone, told his companions of the numerous stars he had seen, and the terrible bite which he had at the moment he touched those curious bits of brass. In vain did I endeavour to persuade them that the bite was nothing more than the combined action of two metals immersed in fluid. The man, who was a victim to his own inquisitive mind, firmly believes to this day that the battery-box is tenanted by genii, in whom the Persians have great and astonishing credulity.

The following day was the one named for the wedding ceremonies. At the appointed hour the khetkhoda arrived to conduct me

to his house. Before leaving my bungalow I noticed the governor speaking in subdued tones to my servant, and wondered, for a time, what could induce the old chief to this act of condescension. The reason soon became evident; on arriving at the village, and mounting to the roof of the khetkhoda's house, I saw, to my surprise, a couple of my own arm-chairs and a small camp-table ready placed; this, then, had been the cause of the khetkhoda's kingly condescension. Afterwards my servant informed me that the governor had instructed him to provide tea, etc., from my store, and asked my permission to do so. I could not refuse, yet I experienced a feeling midway between amusement and vexation at the old man's cunning way of studying economy. The wedding festivities were not of a prolonged or various kind. A band of dancing girls made the proceedings not altogether void of amusement. Yet I did not feel sorry when the due formalities of tea-

drinking were finished, and it was announced that the bride and her lord would retire—which was also a signal for my speedy exit.

Early in March I left Dashtarjin, in consequence of my being transferred to another section of the line, of which Sevund was the chief station.

This portion of the line extended from Shiraz northwards to Abadeh, distant 180 miles.

Sevund is a village similar in size and importance to the one I had just left. It is situated some forty-five miles north-west of Shiraz, about twelve miles north of Persepolis and the Tombs of the Kings.

At the time I went, there was no Government House in Sevund, the only accommodation being one room of a filthy, obnoxious hut, only fit for the people for whom it was built, who expect nothing more. I had not been in this place twenty-four hours before I was virulently attacked by fever, which never left me (for many hours) for upwards of three months;

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nor was it to be expected, surrounded by people whose only delight it is to do nothing, allowing everything rancid and disgusting to accumulate not three yards from the room in which they live. A good substantial stone building has since been erected closely adjacent to the village.

I was occupied during the summer months in repairing and re-erecting a portion of the line; but on each occasion of returning to this hot-bed of fever, I was prostrated during the whole time of my remaining in the village. This continuous state of fever had such a physical effect on me that it was necessary I should be removed to some healthier spot.

The Government magnanimously granted me one month's leave of absence, in which I was to recruit my wasted strength and then return convalescent to my former labours.

My leave was spent at a village in the hills called Dehbeed, and at Yezd, the Guebre capital. This religion (fire-worshippers) is

almost extinct in Persia, only being practised in very remote places. Their belief is that the Supreme Being is eternally in the sun, which is a ball of fire; hence their worship to that great luminary. A Guebre will on no account extinguish a flame, no matter by whom lighted, whether by accident or design. The road to Yezd is nothing but salt desert, wearisome and trackless. The burning heat, the hot sand, and the awful silence which pervades throughout the day, is almost beyond imagination.

We travelled in the night-time, guided by the polar star. No noise was made by men or animals; the camel's tread is soft and unheard. No lights are allowed by the jelowdar (head of the caravan); everything is done to escape the notice of the Turcomans, who are in all probability prowling about not far from us, defying all authority, trusting solely to their swift horses and knowledge of the desert.

We arrived safely in Yezd after five days' marching.

It is, so far as I have seen, the centre of Eastern barbarism and savage life. The people looked on me as some wild animal would do, and on entering the town crowds of half-naked—and in some cases fully so—men, women and children followed to take a look at the 'Feringee Sahib.'

The men looked fierce, savage and ferocious, and the women worse; so that I was not sorry to leave this not very interesting locality, although I was treated with the greatest respect and attention by the Governor (Hajee Mahomed Ali Khan), for whom I had a letter of introduction from an influential merchant of Shiraz.

There is not the remotest sign of civilisation in this part of the globe. It would be difficult, indeed, to find a more desolate waste than Eastern Persia, or a people more ignorant and miserable, brutalised by their isolated position from the civilised world. No spark of progression yet exists—they are the same now as

were their ancestors 4,000 years ago. They treat their horses and camels with more attention than their children or themselves. Their huts (unless they own tents) are built of mud, and furnished with a straw mat and a few earthenware pots used in cooking their rice, etc.

One might as well try to change the wind's wild course as to endeavour to alter their manners, introduce improvements, or drop the seeds of civilisation with any hope of fructification.

Nothing is a match for their inbred national superstitious fanaticism. Their life-long aim is power, their greatest virtue (essentially an Oriental one) is selfishness to the utmost sense of the word; the only understood object of life is the acquisition of power and wealth, and the gratification of the most brutal of passions which man is the subject of: to which end an Oriental will stop at nothing. There is nothing in themselves individually or as a nation

which tends to ennoble the mind, or to raise the faculties and elevate the senses, which places man near the eminence for which he is intended. In Persia it is exactly the reverse.

Speaking of them as a nation, they are the most immoral, degraded, and brutal beings the world can own. An inferior is held simply as an inanimate body or machine; hence the prevalence of slavery and despotism. From the king down to the wandering mendicant their conversation is of the most indecent and obscene character it is possible to imagine; the presence of women and young children does not in the least deter them from its use.

CHAPTER VI.

Fazir Ali Shah.—Persian Justice and Impalement.—Buried Alive.—Execution of Soldiers.—Imperial Rage.—Mutilation.—Despotic Tyranny.—Inspecting Telegraph-Line.—The Abode of the Wind.—'Samovar.'—Dehbeed.—Sport.—Misfortunes.—Lost on the Plain.—Camping in the Snow.—Fears of my Caravan.—Attacked by a Liliputian Army.—Sons of Dogs.—Shiraz.—Solitary Existence.

DURING my absence from Sevund, the local governor had received orders from the Provincial Governor of Fars (Farhad Mirza, the King's uncle) to effect the capture of a noted band of robbers, whose chief was called Fazir Ali Shah (the kingship being self-constituted), who had been outlawed eight or ten years. His fortress, which was reported impregnable, was situated

in a mountainous part of Farsistan and was accessible by one road only, known but to the band. He was betrayed by one of his companions, who was bribed by promises of liberty and a commission in the army, but upon his arrival in Shiraz was beheaded.

Fazir Ali Shah and his band, after a desperate and valiant defence, were eventually captured. Each one had large camel bells fastened in his ears; manacled, and compelled to walk or be dragged after a mule to Shiraz, a distance of 110 miles, they were then cast into prison to await their sentences.

The tribe of Arabs to which Fazir Ali belonged petitioned the Prince Governor for his release, which was promised on the payment of an enormous sum of money. With great difficulty this was collected by the Arabs and paid (it was the proceeds of nearly the whole of their flocks); a further sum was exacted, and a third exorbitant demand was made, and on the Arabs stating their inability to do so (perhaps

they were dubious as to whether a further payment would be of any use), Fazir Ali was tied to a horse to be strangled. This, however, was too slow a death, and he with four others was beheaded, their gory heads being piked and placed on the gate leading to the Governor's palace, and there they remained for months as an example to the marauding people of Fars. Four others were blown from guns, four were crucified, and some were built up in lime—the latter a favourite mode of capital punishment. A hole about four feet deep is dug in the ground, into which the miserable wretch is placed, after his hands have been tied firmly behind him. The lime is then poured over him until the mass resembles a huge pillar. In some cases death ensues immediately the region of the heart is covered.

These human pillars are common outside the gates of Shiraz and Ispahan. The capital, Teheran, is ruled by His Imperial Majesty the Shadow of God in a not less merciful manner.

Some few years ago, on his attempted assassination by two Bawbees (of which religion there are still many adherents), the would-be assassins were sentenced to have thirty holes cut in their bodies, into which lighted candles were to be placed and allowed to burn out. The men were lacerated to a fearful extent, death mercifully ending their sufferings before the candles were put in.

It is a common practice in Persia to put out the eyes or cut out the tongues of all those who may in any way incur their monarch's displeasure.

A few days previous to the Shah leaving for Europe (on his second tour), in April of last year, a most horrifying massacre was perpetrated at the King's order in Teheran.

It is customary on any Mussulman starting on a journey, to pay a farewell visit to the mosque. The King was leaving Teheran for this purpose, *en route* for the shrine of Shah Abdul-Azim, distant about six miles from the

city, when, nearing the gate leading in the direction of the shrine, he was met by some fifteen or twenty soldiers, belonging to an Ispahan regiment, who, in the customary manner, held up a petition, which they were desirous of presenting to his majesty; they were told to await his return, when he would condescend to hear them.

Soon afterwards, the trumpet announceing the King's return was heard, and the soldiers pressed forward with their petition, which asked for pay, they having received none for over fifteen months, and unless it could be obtained previous to the Shah's departure there would be but small possibility of their receiving a fraction of it. The regiment would have been despatched to some southern station, their officers changed, and anything in the shape of a petition would have been treated with summary punishment. On their asking to see the King, an aide-de-camp, from personal motives (he was colonel of the regiment), ordered them to

stand back; this they refused to do, and the royal bodyguard were ordered to beat them. The soldiers—who were entirely destitute of either arms or clothing—in defiance picked up stones and threw at the officious guard, one stone accidentally striking the Shah's carriage.

The King drew his revolver, and ordered his coachman to drive faster, and on reaching the palace, in a tremendous rage, he ordered the whole regiment to be strangled. The ministers who were in attendance on the King with great difficulty persuaded him to consider the consequences of such a course, and at such a time, as there was already much discontent apparent amongst the people at his intended journey.

Eventually his wrath was appeased by twelve soldiers being strangled, and ten others being deprived of their ears and noses and thrown into a vile den called a prison; some bled to death, others received some assistance from passers-by, who themselves were risking

punishment for such help. Amongst the mutilated was the captain of the regiment and two subordinate officers; they were not punished for retaining the pay of the men, but simply to pacify the wrath of a barbaric despot. The soldiers who were strangled were inoffensive men, entirely innocent of the affair.

Two of the murdered men I personally saw sitting near a fruit shop in the bazaars eating some miserable food, scarcely fit for the unclean beast. Three Gholams—servants of the Shah—came up, and in a brutal manner, accompanied with hard knocks, asked if they were Ispahanees. On being answered in the affirmative, they were dragged off, and in a short time were numbered amongst those who were victims to the brutal and savage tyranny of an inhuman monster.

And this is he whose society was courted by some of the most fashionable circles of European nobility! Let us hope that his true character was not then known, and that such

cruelties, totally eclipsing the Bulgarian atrocities, had not at that time been heard of. Should such a contingency, however, as his re-appearance in Europe be possible, it would be wisdom I think, to give him such a reception as he merits. The authorities in England, and those gentleman who hospitably entertained his majesty during his sojourn in this country have profited by the lesson taught them by this Eastern potentate.

The enormous cost of repairing the rooms which the Shah and his suite occupied in Buckingham Palace will, it is to be hoped, teach the English Government to be wary of royal visitors such as the Shah.

Up to December of that year, 1876, I was assisting the divisional superintendent in the erection of the last section of iron poles throughout Persia, and on its completion I left Abadeh to inspect the newly-constructed line to Shiraz, to make the necessary regulation and adjustment of wires, etc. The road from Abadeh

to Shiraz, 180 miles, is mostly of a level sandy nature, the sameness of the country being broken here and there by ranges of hills running transversely over the road, and in some places by lofty mountains, which were at this time covered with a glittering whiteness.

At the time I left Abadeh, the weather was very unsettled, symptoms of an impending snowstorm being visible, which hastened my movements. Our first day's march was but of eight miles; the wind was bitterly cold, piercing through sheepskin and ulster alike. Heavy clouds were hanging over our heads as we entered the caravanserai, which gave promise of no bright hopes for the morrow.

On throwing open the few boards which formed the door of my room the following morning, I was not surprised to see a good thickness of Scotch feathers on the ground. The storm must have commenced about midnight; the air was still full of large flakes, and we saw no sign of its abating.

The horses were at length saddled up, and we started for Khaneh Korah, a stage of twenty-eight miles, one of the most wearisome rides it is possible to conceive, not a hut, nor even a tree or plant, to be seen the whole distance.

I need scarcely describe the manner in which we reached our shelter, late in the evening, half-starved, and almost blinded by the perpetual glare of the snow.

Khaneh Korah is called by the Persians 'Khaneh-i-bād, ('The Abode of the Wind'), and well does it merit the appellation. Throughout the entire night the howling and shrieking of the wind, as it shook the rackety doors and windows of the chapar khaneh, was deafening: all attempts at sleeping were useless.

Towards day-break it became intolerable. I took a blanket, and, tired and sleepy, went below to the stables, and there obtained two or three hours' rest, glad enough to avail myself of such a bedroom as this.

Our next stage was a little more cheering, although the snow still filled the air, and accumulated at each step we took. Dehbeed, a telegraph station, was our hope, where we could look for better things than at the stormy seat of the hero in one of Æsop's fables.

From day-break until the hours of day were far advanced we toiled on, facing the storm. The cold was too intense to think of stopping on the way for eating; a piece of acorn bread and a few dates, which I had remembered to pocket at Kaneh Korah, was all my stock of provisions. Not a shelter-house the whole way where we could find a moment's protection from the pitiless wintry blasts!

It was, as I have said, late ere we saw in the distance the grim, ghost-like trees which surround the Dehbeed office. Wreaths of smoke were curling in fantastic shapes from the English-built chimneys of the house, giving to me a welcome foretaste of the internal comforts.

Our appetites had been sharpened by the long ride through the keen, biting frosty air, and as I dismounted at the gate, I saw through the window the samovar cheerily hissing and bubbling, which betokened something more inviting not far off.

Dehbeed could with appropriateness be called, 'The House on the Moor.' For miles around there is neither house nor tent. An extensive plain stretches in every quarter, edged in, afar off, by ranges of lofty snow-capped mountains.

The climate during the summer months is exquisite, the plain, always verdant, abounding with game and sport—wild sheep and goats, deer, grouse, pigeons, ducks, and the larger kind of animals, such as the tiger, panther, wild ass, and pigs, being amongst the number.

In the cold and dreary days of winter the officer at Dehbeed may without moving beyond the precincts of his own domicile find plenty

of sport and work for his rifle on the packs of wolves, hyenas, jackals, foxes, and sometimes bears, attracted thither by the savoury smells which proceed from the cookery establishment.

There can scarcely be conceived a more isolated, desolate spot than Dehbeed. Silence does indeed reign supreme in this particular spot—the stillness which pervades is only broken at times by the sharp crack and the resounding report of the hunter's rifle, or by the death cry of a fierce panther which has received the leaden messenger of death.

It is to the traveller's eye, approaching either way, an oasis; for more than 120 miles there are but three signs of the presence of man. Such are the places chosen by the Indian Government as telegraph stations.

At each station they post one lonely, almost forgotten Englishman, who must be his own doctor, parson and lawyer, and who seldom hears a word of his mother tongue, unless,

indeed, he resorts to the amusing pastime of conversing with himself. The office is almost a sinecure one, built for the purpose of maintaining the line.

On mounting the following morning, the icicles were hanging on the windows and trees, and there was every appearance of another storm. The surrounding scenery was one of absolute whiteness, grand, no doubt, to an uninterested spectator, but to me it had no charms. The stage in the warmer months is a most pleasant one; but with three feet of snow on the ground the prospects are of a gloomy nature.

The misfortunes of the day commenced by my servant unfortunately misplacing my goggles, which in Persia are of priceless value in protecting the eyes from the baneful effects of the snow. In a short time the continuous glare so affected my eyes that I was compelled to cover my head to prevent the terrible result of exposure—snow-blindness.

A sudden thaw the previous night, followed by a sharp frost, had made the roads even worse than before : for a considerable distance we were obliged to plod our way on foot.

Near Khaneh Kergoon (a caravanserai midway between Dehbeed and Morghaub) several poles had been snapped by the frost and torn down by the wind. We were consequently delayed some hours in their re-erection ; towards dusk the work was temporarily finished, and we started for Khaneh Kergoon, about three miles distant.

Fears were expressed as to our reaching that haven of refuge, but one or two workmen declared they could find the place in the darkest night, so we hastily pushed on. It was evident that unless we reached the caravanserai before dark there would be a serious possibility of our having to encamp in the snow, the roads being entirely blocked, our only guide over this wild region being the iron poles of the telegraph line.

At first we tried to discover the footprints of my caravan, which had passed on. This we found impossible. Our last resource was to follow the line. The darkness became every minute more intense, and even this was a forlorn hope. For upwards of four hours we vainly endeavoured to find our way through the blinding snow, each minute getting colder and more benumbed.

The prospect of being safely housed from the storm—even in the doorless and windowless rooms of a deserted rest-house—was sufficient to renew our efforts. At last, however, dispirited and without hope, and fearing lest we might wander further away in the darkness, I most reluctantly gave the order to camp.

What an encampment! Without covering save our already well-soaked clothes, food, or fuel, our position was not enviable. We had repeatedly, though ineffectually, tried to retrace our steps to the line; but each time doomed to bitter disappointment.

It was no easy matter to clear away a few yards of snow and erect our small tent, generally used for line material. At last it was finished, and we were safely lodged inside, looking blankly at each other, without food or fire. Suddenly I thought of a ladder which was outside, and of little use; this I had broken up, and after some little difficulty we managed to get a fire; but by this time the snow had commenced to ooze through our tent, and fell hissing on our only comfort, and eventually — defying all our endeavours to protect it—with a hiss and a sputter louder than the rest, it gave up the ghost.

There is no necessity to linger upon the miserable hours which passed before morning dawned. All night the melting snow fell down, and the tent, containing three men and two horses, was literally a pool of muddy water.

Towards morning I fell into a feverish sleep, stretched upon a horse-rug which should have

been the covering of one of the trembling brutes we had in the tent.

At dawn of day, on emerging from our comfortless shelter, our surprise may be imagined: we saw not two hundred yards away, the great end of all our search—the ruined caravanserai. On closer examination I found that we had several times during our wanderings made a complete circle of the walls.

On entering the place the *coup de grâce* of our miseries was apparent: my caravan had not yet arrived. Most probably they, too, were lost — perhaps buried in the snow.

After a miserable breakfast of dates and sour milk, I went out to finish a little work near the caravanserai, continually casting my eyes over the snowy plain, trying to discover some speck in which I might recognise my lost mules. But vain the hope—night arrived and no tidings.

Fears now commenced to engender in my

mind as to their safety; and I determined, with the morning, to return to Dehbeed, hoping that there I might either find or hear news of the lost party.

The storm had altogether ceased since morning, succeeded, as is usually the case, by a solemn calm. That night was passed in scarcely a less wretched manner than the preceding one. I had a few camel-rugs to cover me, and, compared to the one of the previous night, a dry floor.

I was most unwillingly kept awake throughout the night by the small yet lively occupants of the camel rugs, who appeared to unanimously resent the usurpation of their common rights by collecting their entire strength, and attacking me with what might be Liliputian spears. Several times they appeared to be holding some kind of athletic sports on my body. It certainly was not amusing to me, although undoubtedly it must have been to these insulted inhabitants of the camel-rugs.

Midnight scarcely had struck on my repeater when I heard loud and incessant shouting and hammerings at the outside door. I at once surmised that it was a band of Arabs who might be passing, and did not relish the idea of their company; but I was pleasantly surprised to hear the gruff voice of my groom, asking in a dolorous tone if the 'sahib' had been there.

Upon receiving an affirmative reply, the tone of voice was instantly changed, and the caravanserai keeper was told in no complimentary terms to bring lights; then came the bustle of unloading, and complaints from the muleteers, who solemnly declared that they had long ago ceased to exist.

They cursed the road, the mules, and the mules' fathers to generations long since passed away; protested that the mules could not be more than sons of dogs, or they would never have lost the road. They, like myself, had lost the way, the density of snow hiding all

signs of the telegraph poles, but more fortunately than we, had accidentally wandered to a village about eight miles away, where they rested till daybreak.

In the morning I enjoyed my breakfast, which had been cooked for dinner two days before, and we proceeded on towards Shiraz.

It is only after a day's toil and hardships that one can fully appreciate a haven of rest, even though it be a mud-hut without windows or doors, or a filthy room in some thickly populated Persian village. Nevertheless, the traveller hails with intense delight and gratification the sight of a resting-place, be it whatever it may; and as he is screened from the sun's scorching heat, and the blinding dust or the snow of those vast Asiatic plains, and is stretched full length on the cool floor, his fatigue, troubles, privations and dangers are at once forgotten.

It was with feelings similar to these I

beheld the high walls of the caravanserai at Morghaub, raised higher by the amount of snow which had fallen on them; the cold then was intense, but the worst part of the journey was over.

Near the Persepolis we were again delayed by broken poles; but here the snow was not so deep, the road was in a much better condition, and we were not subjected to a night's exposure.

Two days afterwards (on December 23rd), having finished my inspection, I once more came in sight of the gilded domes of Shiraz.

Upon nearing the Ispahan gate, I saw in the distance two or three horsemen riding towards me. On nearer approach I knew them to be the European residents of Shiraz, who had been apprised of my coming, and in the customary fashion had rode out to welcome the new-comer, always glad to receive anyone who could for a time make an addition to their small circle of friends. Indeed, one

might almost use a more endearing term; for in such a far-off land, where native society is utterly impossible, one's heart yearns towards an Englishman, be he stranger or friend.

Very often this genuine hospitality is greatly trespassed upon by loafing, dissimulating Italians and Germans, who frequently pass through Persia on foot, *en route* for India. Some Englishmen there are who have spoken disrespectfully of the hospitality of their countrymen in Persia. I said 'some Englishmen,' but I believe they are now naturalized Americans; a correspondent of African fame might have spoken in terms of courtesy of the receptions he met with in Persia, certain it is that a less harsh sentence than the one spoken by him was merited.

It was with feelings of great gladness that I recognised these familiar faces, and looked forward to a few months in their society.

The day was far spent as we passed the Musjid-i-Nau (new mosque) and heard from

the roof of an adjacant building the shrill voice of the moolah (priest) calling the true believers to evening prayer. His sonorous tones were heard far and near, and as his 'Allah Ackbar! Allah Ackbar!' ('God is great!') and 'La illah i Allah!' ('There is only one God!') resounded through the building, the faithful hurried to their common place of prayer, and for upwards of half an hour lent themselves indefatigably to senseless repetitions of 'God is great!'—once or twice, perhaps, the gesticulations being interrupted by some considerate friend, who, having finished his devotions, had lighted a kalyun, or nargileh, and presented to his fellow devotee, who, after taking a few whiffs, will resume his cries and prostrations.

These devotional exercises are also often interrupted by the close proximity of a street dog, who has unwittingly strayed towards the pious believer; a string of oaths is at once hurled against the canine offender, accompanied

occasionally by a tremendous kick; the dog's parentage is with many oaths eternally cursed; then, with solemn mutterings of 'God is great!' the true believer resumes his devout attitude.

A kalyun is one thing which a Persian never refuses, not even at prayer. At the very height of passion he is pacified by its soothing influence, and once more thinks of Paradise and the houris when the clouds of smoke scented with rosewater are puffed from his capacious throat.

I had been in the saddle since early morning, and was anything but sorry to arrive before the door of a friend's house, where I was hospitably received by his good lady. I may say that fatigue was quickly forgotten, and when we retired to rest, the Eastern horizon was already giving tokens of approaching day.

A description of such meetings as this is almost beyond the range of possibility, after months of travelling and hardships of a camp life—all day exposed to a terrific heat, and at

night the sultry air. peculiar to Eastern countries, or perhaps living, or rather existing, in some solitary spot, away from all signs of civilisation or modern culture, the only words of conversation must be with one's own servants, in a language too difficult to allow anything but conventionalities—the days spent in one methodical routine, reading, riding and shooting.

In the early morning one may take a gun, and for an hour or two find sport enough; towards noon the heat becomes so oppressive that outdoor amusements and exercise are impossible. From that time until almost sunset books may occupy the mind, but more frequently are such things untouched, and the almost universal Anglo-Asiatic habit, a doze, is indulged in. A walk or ride can be taken until such time as the sinking sun affords light, for in the East there is no twilight.

Then come the long weary hours of the evening, which must of necessity be spent at

home. Nothing outside the bungalow except thick impenetrable darkness, and wild beasts whose cries and howlings, mingled with those of the village dogs, are sometimes horrific. The hour for retiring is generally an early one, and is more welcome than any other of the twenty-four, unless, however, it be the hour for the arrival of the monthly mail, which usually affords some excitement for all.

This montonous sameness of months, without any single mutation, is no doubt the great goal of life to those who with the poet exclaim, 'Ah me! solitude is bliss;' but to one differently tempered by Dame Nature, this identicalness of existence is not to be ardently desired.

CHAPTER VII.

Christmas-day.—Severity of the Winter.—Cause of Famine.—Orders to Leave.—The Seal.—Written Agreements.—Controversy.—'Yallah!'—*En route.*—Zergoon.—Protectionists.—Persepolis.—Saidoon.—Old Friends.—Caravan looted.—Compensation.—Tomb of King Cyrus.—Morghaub.—Ruins of Pasargadae.

CHRISTMAS-DAY was signalized in a true English fashion by a heavy downfall of snow. We were making preparations for a right good festive evening, but '*l'homme propose et Dieu dispose*'—before noon I received a communication from the officer in charge of the station that my section of lines was totally interrupted.

In a short time I, with some workmen, was out on the road. The recent fall of snow made our progress slow, but this time the fates

were rather propitious. About six miles from the city we found and repaired the fault, which restored through communication, and in a short time we were retracing our steps as quickly as the deeply accumulated snow would permit.

As dinner-time was not far distant, I was more anxious to be back: I need not add that I was just in time, although in Bedford cord, to sit down to a sumptuous repast at which all the Europeans of Shiraz (ten) were present.

On New Year's Eve a similar celebration took place. About five minutes before midnight it was proposed that we should each give five minutes' silent thought to 'our far-off home;' and as each one with covered face stood, their whole heart being upwards of 6,000 miles away, a deep and solemn silence pervaded the room; the solemnity of the occasion will never be forgotten.

Some had been away from home and friends

upwards of a dozen years, and were eagerly anticipating an early return to those familiar scenes, somewhat dimly seen by the lapse of so many years—others were but in their first years; but each had one loved spot. Some were careworn, and brooding over hopes long since crushed, whilst others were full of buoyancy, and elated with hopefulness of the future. All minds were alike in one respect: that far-off spot, England, was the centre of all our cherished feelings.

As the old year passed away these feelings became more impressive, and as the clock tolled out the death-notes of the old and the advent of a new year, we joined hands, and the heartiness and sincerity with which 'Auld lang syne' was sung can only be equalled and appreciated by those who are in similar circumstances, far from home and its comforts, and who have but the opportunity of meeting their fellow-countrymen at such times as these.

The winter of this year was one of greater severity than is generally felt in Persia. The Caravan roads were in many places entirely blocked with snow, and from December until late in February caravans were unable to leave Shiraz either northwards or southwards.

Deaths from starvation and frost were of an appalling frequency. On several occasions the English courier (a native) from Bushire, whilst crossing the mountains, was severely frostbitten.

In Western Persia, and towards the Turkish frontier, the severity of the season was marked with great distress, hundreds of poorly clad, ill-fed villagers succumbing to the bitter pangs of hunger and cold. Great scarcity of provisions was the result of the prolonged winter.

No notice of such distress is taken by the Government. When the Minister of the Interior was informed of the grave state of this part of the country, he merely shrugged his

shoulders, and replied that it was the will of Allah.

No store of corn is laid up during the summer. Just sufficient is grown by the Ryots for their own personal use and to pay the taxes imposed on them. The land is used up with cotton and opium, which brings in a better market value. The wealthier class of Persians (merchants) never think of sowing more corn than will be required for consumption and seed. Sometimes they will sow none at all, but fill all cultivated land with cotton, tobacco and opium, which, as I have said, finds a readier and nearer market than would grain.

The consequence of this deplorable want of wisdom, both in the local government and the individual, is that at the first scarcity of rain, food at once becomes scarce. Should an entire season pass without rain, the only possible, though lamentable, result is a famine, as was the case in 1873.

By using the land—which is rich and good where cultivated—for corn, maize, etc., in its proper proportion, and in maintaining local storehouses, these disastrous seasons would be, if not altogether avoided, greatly mitigated. But in Persia, so long as there is plenty for the despot and his minion-like ministers, no thought or provision is thought of for the future.

Early in March I received orders to leave Shiraz as early as possible for Teheran, and on the 10th of that month my caravan was in readiness, and only required the muleteers seal and my own to complete the arrangements.

Throughout the East the seal is universally used. Every tradesman, every water-carrier, and, in fact, every one else, is possessed of a seal. Orientals are extremely fond of written agreements, and for the most trivial transaction the agreement is written and the inevitable seal is produced, and after much

careful examination the impression of the seal is affixed.

Sometimes the trader is unable to write. If such be the case, he will send for, or bring, the public scribe, who, after long deliberation, questioning and cross-questioning, will present to the 'sahib' the agreement, which, if in conformity with the wishes of both parties, is sealed.

It is amusing to note the solemn countenance of the scribe as he writes the words of the contract. It is seldom the man himself dictates this; he generally is helped by a host of acquaintances, who accompany him on his important errand, and voluntarily offer their superior judgment.

A seal intrusted to another is considered a great honour: it transfers power from the giver to the holder, and is always esteemed as a great confidence.

The signet was and is a symbol of supreme authority. The ring given by the Egyptian Pharaoh to Joseph invested him with the chief

power of the state. The Holy Sepulchre was sealed—no doubt with the commander's seal—to make it secure, or perchance with that of the Emperor himself, the Roman officer knowing no one would dare break the seal of the great Cæsar. In Persia, all documents pertaining to Government affairs are sealed by the Shah, or in his absence by the Minister intrusted with this sovereign power.

When the agreement with my charvodar (muleteer) had been signed, he assured me, with many prostrations, that his beard was in my hands, and that he was my sacrifice and my slave: the mules should be brought at once. He was then dismissed, with orders to be loaded up by sunset.

Noon passed, and evening approached, yet without the promised mules. Towards sunset the charvodar reappeared, saying that (through his promises so lavishly bestowed on me) he had eaten much dirt, yet the animals could not be found before morning.

I was expecting, and quite ready for this announcement, it being but the customary thing in this country of truthfulness, and I threatened, in lieu of non-appearance in less than three hours, to deduct two days' hire from each mule. The man protested that the animals were not in town, but I knew it was but an excuse—one more falsehood on the already well-filled page.

After much useless palaver and controversy between the muleteer and my servant—he, absurdly obsequious, left, and in a short time the peculiar jingle of the peeshang's (leading mule) bell was heard, and a string of mules followed into the courtyard.

The process of loading now commenced, and after much shouting — amid which my muleteer's volubility of speech could not be questioned—and delay, I had the pleasure of seeing the charvodar 'gird up his loins,' and with many a 'Yallah!' ('God help us!') lead the peeshang into the road.

I now mounted my horse, and commenced a journey of 750 miles, which would occupy about thirty-four days.

It was with feelings of reluctancy and deep disappointment that I left Shiraz. I was leaving for a place where I should be an entire stranger, where fresh friends and acquaintances must of necessity be made—leaving those friends who in the hour of danger had proved themselves worthy of that name, to find those who would use the term simply in the common use of language. The feelings of loneliness and despondency were much more acute than on any former occasion. Not even on leaving England were these so intense as on the present journey.

I was accompanied a considerable distance by the members of the staff and some Armenian Christians with whom I was acquainted, until the setting sun warned them, that if they wished to return ere darkness set in, it was time their horses were turned towards the city. As everything has

an end, so had our leave-taking. Several times each one of us turned in the saddle to wave our helmets at the fast receding forms, until a bend in the road hid them from my sight.

Our first stage was Zergoon, distant five farsaks (twenty miles), from Shiraz. The road is a most miserable one, and never did it appear more so than on this night. A barren plain covers the entire way; the road is thickly strewn with large sharp stones. At each step the mules would stumble in the darkness over some huge boulder, which the Persians, through laziness, refuse to remove—much rather would they allow the poor animals to fall and lacerate their flesh on the razor-like edge of the flinty stones, and repack the fallen loads, than lend a hand for their removal.

High mountains rise at either side, and the eye is unrelieved of this barrenness until nearing the end of the stage, when the road runs through the richly cultivated plain of Zergoon.

Nearing the village, which is situated at the base of a stupendous range of hills, are cotton, maize and tobacco fields, rich in their productions. Passing these, a few mud ruins are dotted here and there, and then comes the filthy smell of a Persian village.

The chapar khaneh is, I may say, the best in the country, and ofttimes have I been pleased to see the whitewashed walls of this clean, healthily built little rest-house.

As we passed through the narrow lanes, or rather alleys, of Zergoon, the street dogs were awakened to a very lively sense of duty by one of the most dismal howlings I ever heard. The good people of Zergoon were in no way disturbed, however, at the noise. We passed many sleeping men stretched full length at the roadside, notwithstanding the cold was intense. In a short time after our arrival all was quiet, and I fell into a refreshing sleep.

I had given orders for an early departure,

as I wished to pay a farewell visit to the Persepolis and Tombs of the Kings, which were in our day's route. Long ere the sun had made his advent we had saddled up and were moving towards the magnificent ruins of Alexander the Great.

From Zergoon an extensive plain spreads itself some twenty-five miles northwards. Around the village the land is very marshy; in winter and early spring the surrounding country is entirely under water. Small bridges have been built to facilitate the passage of caravans. Here the sportsman finds plenty of game—wild ducks and pigeons offer great attractions to one so inclined.

Leaving Zergoon, the first sign of life is Pool-i-Khan, or the Lord's Bridge, so named after some generous-hearted Persian noble, who in the fulness of a too patriotic heart caused its erection. On nearer approach, one would imagine that the art of bridge-building had not, in those days, reached the acme of per-

fection which graces the fame of these latter days of the nineteenth century. From the road's level to the summit of the bridge fifty feet are interjacent; its ascent reminds one too forcibly of the wearisome journey from Bushire to Shiraz, or of the tiring ascent of the London fire monument in Fish Street; and to say that the structure was slightly awry would be but gross flattery.

A miserable hut of river reeds is built at one extremity of the bridge, which affords shelter to a few not less miserable men who are called road-guards, stationed here by a munificent Government to protect (!) travellers from molestation.

These men are supposed to receive a salary of about three shillings per month; but were they questioned as to the last date of payment, their answer would undoubtedly be: 'We have no knowledge—God knows!' The salaries are paid by the district Governor to some subordinate officer, who hands over a portion only

to the head road-guard, whilst the remainder he appropriates to his own use.

The head road-guard, on his own responsibility, thinks great trouble is avoided by making the payments every four or six months; but owing to much-regretted miscalculation of dates, the four months are generally prolonged to fourteen, when the men receive two or three months' pay, with a promise of better things in the future; and should the road-guards in discontent refuse to remain at their post, the first man who is 'wanted' for robbery in that locality is indubitably the dissatisfied public guardian, who, without being allowed a word in defence, would be sentenced to some inhuman torture—perhaps, as is usually, the case, to be built up alive. Such is the administration of justice in the realms of the Shadow of the Universe!

Should the traveller decline their proffered protection, and forget to present them with two or three krans, he may possibly, a short

distance further, meet a body of armed men, who insinuatingly ask for pul (money); and unless that faculty of the brain called memory be defective, in these gentleman of the road may be recognised our would-be guardians.

From Pool-i-Khan to Persepolis—eight miles—the road runs through a continuation of the plain, richly cultivated by the waters of the river Bunderūd, which is one of the largest in Persia. In winter it is so swollen by water from the adjacent hills that it frequently overflows its banks and submerges the surrounding land.

This plain is spoken of by the Greek historians as the plain of a hundred cities, abounding in riches, watered by an ever-flowing river, and honoured by the first palace of King Cyrus (whose tomb is but a few miles distant). At the present time one or two insignificant mud villages are to be seen where once this lauded grandeur of the Great Persian Empire stood.

The population is very scanty, and where

teeming thousands, perhaps millions, once lived and passed through the rush and hush of life, but a few unenlightened villagers now, in a most primitive manner, accept the toils and burdens of their isolated existence.

It reminded me of the words of a modern English writer (Macaulay), speaking of the possibilities of the New-Zealander sitting on the overthrown and moss-clad stones of London Bridge and viewing with trembling imagination the crumbled ruins of the great London, once the most populous city of the known world. Nations exist and pass away: the distant future may witness such sights on the overgrown grandeur of our boasted capital—the Houses of Parliament, like the Persepolis, left as a mark and a tribute to by-gone greatness.

Whilst still a considerable distance from the Persepolis, the mighty majestic pillars of these grand old ruins are seen proudly raising their ornamented heads toward the heavens, standing monuments of the work of (according to

some historians) 3,000 years ago. Some of the pillars in solid white marble exceed seventy feet in height, and are in the most perfect state of preservation.

The Persepolis is built at the most northern extremity of the plain, at the base of a high and ruggid mountain called Istakar. The ascent from the plain to the Hall of Justice is by a splendid staircase of solid marble ; each step is fourteen inches deep, and are eighty in number at both extremities. On reaching the summit, the enraptured gaze of the traveller is met by two enormous and magnificent slabs of marble, on which are sculptured two colossal bulls : this is the entrance to the hall called Justice.

Further on is the king's bedchamber—a splendid room of hieroglyphic sculpture, in the same preserved perfection ; but it would be useless and presumptive on my part to attempt a description of these, the oldest ruins in the world, after the most graphic and elucidative articles by Ferguson, Rawlinson and others.

The Tombs of the Kings, six miles off, are described in the same eulogistic manner by Dr. Ferguson. They are three in number, cut in marble; each room is about nine feet in length, six in width, and eight in height. It is impossible to enter them except by ropes from above, and this being so dangerous few attempt it.

From here to our caravanserai is eight miles, and as the sun is rapidly sinking in the western horizon, we deem it time to depart.

The whole distance from Pool-i-Khan is a pleasant ride: rich fields of yellow corn, cotton, castor-oil plants, and opium are approaching harvest time; vineyards are here and there passed; and just as the last ray of the sun cast its golden hue on the mountain tops, we descried not far ahead the chapar khaneh of Saidoon nestling amongst the many groves of pomegranate and fig-trees of that pretty English-looking village, one of, if not *the* prettiest in Persia.

I was now forty-seven miles on my journey to Teheran.

In the morning, after receiving a visit from the village governor, I again mounted my horse —this time with the pleasure of knowing that before noon I should be with an European family — the inspector's of my old station, Sevund.

I arrived in time for breakfast, and it did not require much persuasion to induce me to remain the day, although I had but made ten miles since morning, and with the prospect of thirty-six miles the following day. The night was far spent ere we retired to our couches, and I had not been asleep long before the familiar voice of my servant awoke me to say that the caravan was ready to start. However, I did not leave until after the morning meal, my friends pressed me so much to stay a little longer : the caravan proceeded, whilst myself and servants followed.

A short time after noon found me a dozen

miles from our last halting-place, under a shady tree, enjoying my breakfast off a newly-shot duck and fresh dates.

The caravan track leading to our next resting place is generally infested with Arab robbers. It runs through a mountain defile, whence it is altogether impossible to attempt an escape. However, on this occasion I was more fortunate than on a previous one, when my caravan was attacked and robbed of almost all it carried.

I myself was inspecting the line, which is usually constructed some distance from the caravan roads, on account of the nomadic tribes using the insulators and cast-iron sockets as targets for their matchlocks. My caravan was proceeding along this road, called 'Tang-i-Bulaghee' ('The Crooked Pass'), when a number of Arab horsemen rode up and peremptorily demanded everything to be given up. They asked where the money was, and on being informed that the 'Sahib' carried it, they

unmercifully beat all who were with the caravan, stripped and left them in their pitiable condition; one muleteer was slightly wounded by a sword cut.

Under such circumstances the Persian Government afford such compensation as is submitted by the injured party through the local governor, the latter personage being supposed to collect the indemnity from the tribe by whom the robbery is committed. It invariably falls to the lot of the villagers of that district, not to pay the amount submitted, but twice that sum, the second half being recompense for the governor and his subordinates. Such amends I received from that source, but of the annoyance and trouble caused nothing is said.

It was November when this robbery was committed; the cold was intense, and the certainty that unless I could buy or borrow something I should be obliged to sleep for some nights *minus* bed or blankets was a con-

summation not to be wished. My servants and muleteers were in a far worse plight, having nothing to protect them from the cutting blasts of wind except the camel and mule rugs which were taken from the poor, already half-starved animals.

On this journey to Teheran we passed un molested through the 'Tang.' I had fully determined this time to protect my rights had they been assailed.

At the northern side of this pass we enter upon a plain similar to the one on which the ruins of the Persepolis stands. One village is built in its centre, and named after the illustrious king whose tomb is here. The Persians call it the tomb of their Solomon—it is really the burial place of King Cyrus, spoken of by the Prophet Ezra and others.

The tomb is of white marble, standing some thirty feet high, ascended by huge giant-like steps: the interior of the tomb is but small, compared with the massiveness of its

external appearance; it is scarcely six feet long, and not as much in height. It has not withstood the ravages of time and decay near so well as the palace of its renowned builder (it is said that Cyrus built this tomb for himself). Some portions of the entrance are crumbling away; the outer work is bleached and whitened by the heat of thousands of years.

It is indeed miraculous how these relics of Persia's ancient grandeur have resisted the onslaughts of the great ravager—Time. Exposed to the violence of rains, the burning heat of the sun, and devastating storms, one wonders in awe-struck surprise at the age of these giant structures. The hands which assisted in rearing up the columns long, long ago mouldered away into the dust, returned from whence they came; but their works still stand as monuments of their skill.

Closely adjacent to the tomb of Cyrus stand the ruins of a Guebre temple; its age is unknown. It is probable the temple was

erected about the time of Cyrus, as it bears similar inscriptions, and the architecture is of the same period. All around the neighbourhood are huge stones and fallen pillars, denoting the existence of an extensively populated city.

The valley of Morghaub (the ancient Pasargadæ) is cultivated, and produces in abundance barley, maize, etc. The vineyards around the village are extensive, the grapes being exceedingly large and luscious. Morghaub is celebrated throughout Persia as a carpet manufactory, which are of the finest in the East.

Morghaub was our halting place. Its ancient name Pasargadæ originates from a camp which remained on the spot when Cyrus, King of Persia, conquered the Median King of Rhey or Rhages.

After being located in the Morghaub post-house some time, I, loosely dressed, strolled along the roof gazing at the village scenery,

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whistling or humming some well known air. The sun was just setting, and I was about to turn in, when I heard a sharp step, and a cheery voice exclaimed, 'An Englishman, by Jove!'

The words, like the voice, were welcome; the sudden change of my countenance assured the new-comer that a veritable Englishman was before him.

A hearty grip, followed by mutual expressions of delight, and we exchanged our destinations. My newly found friend was for Baghdad, *viâ* Bushire. Sorry I was to find I must soon bid adieu to him.

A merry evening was passed together, and I think we both reluctantly raised our helmets as we rode off in different directions the following morning. Such a meeting but seldom occurs in the wilds of Persia. I was altogether unaware of European presence nearer than my friends at Sevund, forty miles away; the surprise was agreeable, the leave-taking particularly uninviting.

CHAPTER VIII.

An Escort. — Sport. — Execution. — Wolves. — 'Burnt Father.'—Hunting by Candlelight.—Eternal Friendship. — Yezdicast. — Fashionable Visitors. — Subterranean Exploration.—Obnoxious Smells.—Chlorodyne. —Courier. — Koomeshah. — Bereavement. — Myer.— Ispahan.—Guana.—Half the World.—Good-morning, Sir.—Missionary.

BY sunrise I was in the saddle and wending my way through the fertile pastures and vineyards *en route* for Dehbeed.

We stopped for breakfast at the ruined caravanserai of old repute—the place of our out-door encampment a few months before. We had brought a plentiful supply of grapes from Morghaub, which were very palatable after the meal of dates, sour milk and curry.

I sat on the banks of the river close by, and might have been, to an ignorant observer, an Arab chieftain : not many yards from me were grouped some twenty villainous, cut-throat-looking ruffians, who had been sent by the head road-guard to escort me to Dehbeed. At times one would look to the edge of his scimitar, another would closely examine the priming of his charge, in order perhaps to prove their fidelity to my person.

We, however, presented a very formidable appearance to a passing tribe of Arabs whom we encountered on the road; my body-guard were, as I afterwards learnt, in unspeakable agonies to pay off an old debt they owed this tribe, but in my presence they wisely refrained from any outward show.

Dehbeed was reached early in the afternoon. I remained here with one servant three days, whilst my caravan proceeded on its journey northwards. During this time we were not inactive. The friend with whom I was staying

was a first rate hand with the wild pigs. Our hunting excursions proved most fortunate—the second evening found us with two hybecks, four deer, and a couple of small pigs as a reward for our exertions.

My saddle-horse had gone with the mules, so on the third morning, early, Mahomed Sadak (my man) and myself started 'chapar.' We overtook the caravan before sunset, about seventy-eight miles from Dehbeed.

From Dehbeed to Abadeh, another telegraph station, I have previously delineated—it was at this latter place where we caught up the party. This was the most northerly point to which I had as yet travelled; beyond here, I was a stranger to the road.

The following day, as we wound our way through the avenues of trees outside Abadeh, we came suddenly upon a numerous body of horsemen, who, it turned out, belonged to the governor, and were awaiting his arrival to commence the horrid work of building-up

three men in lime. I hurried on to escape the sight, once being sufficient for me to witness such executions.

Abadeh is famed throughout the Eastern bazaars for its unequalled carving on wood, some good specimens of which I obtained before leaving.

From this place to the next stage, Shulgistoon, the road is uninteresting — the whole length is a dreary waste. We were nearing the end of our day's stage when some moving object on our right attracted my attention. I galloped a few hundred yards, when I saw the objects of my run : a couple of half-famished wolves, no doubt on their way to the village. They refused fight, and quickly made off towards the hills, their speed being accelerated by a bullet from my Martini-Henri, which struck the hindermost ; he, however, made good his escape. The soft ground prevented my giving chase.

We arrived at Shulgistoon chapar khaneh

in good time, but were the first too late. A Persian khan with his 'harem' had been located in the best room for some time, and, of course, to ask the ladies to 'move' out was a thing not to be allowed—at least, not by an Englishman; although my servants could not see why all these 'sons of dogs' should remain in when the 'sahib' was there.

They were nevertheless requested to find other quarters, a little later on, by a moolah who was travelling from Teheran to Shiraz; and had it not been for my timely and stern intervention, the fair occupants (they perhaps were dusky — I cannot say) would most certainly have been driven out into the cold March air, notwithstanding all the vociferous threats of punishment poured forth by their jealous owner, who expressed his gratitude to me for the interference. The moolah, on the contrary, would greatly have liked to 'burn my father,' had he dared to so give publicity

to his thoughts. He—perhaps wisely—thought of the consequences, and remained quiescent; his looks, however, betrayed his thoughts.

My lodgings that night were in a lower apartment, in a small stifling room used as a storehouse for corn. This I gave little or no thought to, and had my rest been undisturbed, no word of complaint would have escaped my lips. As it was, my bed was uninvitedly shared by a host of other and lesser animals, who used all their endeavours, but in vain, to keep my thoughts centred on things earthly by innumerable spear-like thrusts from head to foot; but after a ride of eighty-six miles without sleep, it would require a much more pleasing inducement than hunting with a candle to have kept me awake throughout the night.

Early the following morning I heard all astir, and after putting on my riding-equipment, spurs, revolver, and helmet, I stepped outside, and was just in time to speak a few

farewell words to the discourteous moolah, who wished me an almost forced 'God be with you!'

In a short time I heard the voice of the khan calling for the 'sahib.' I went out and was kindly invited to partake of a cup of tea with him. Eternal friendship, he assured me, had been established between ourselves through my condescension. A pleasant conversation followed, in the course of which the khan informed me that he had been in Europe.

Vienna, he said, was the boundary point westward of his travels. He had greatly desired to see London, but Allah had not so planned it. The king had recalled him when on the point of leaving for the Modern Babylon. In parting, he wished my star would ever be in the ascendancy, and promised to call on me at Teheran on his return. Our acquaintance was never renewed; he, like me, forgetting the episode of our introduction.

Yezdicast was our next stage, twenty-five

miles from Shulgistoon. A continuation of the barren undulating plain; not a single particle of vegetation to be seen.

Yezdicast is a village built on the point of a rock overhanging the bed of the Morghaub River; it is about two hundred feet from the earth's level, and is entered by a drawbridge which crosses a moat at the southern extremity of the village. The chapar khaneh and caravanserai are built below, and appear, when looking from the village above, mere huts in size. On looking through the caravanserai, I found names of travellers as far back as 1746, also 'Une Scientific Expédition à Perse, 1753,' and several other dates equally old.

I had not been seated long in the chapar khaneh, when the Ketkhoda of Yezdicast was announced; and after drinking a few cups of tea, he invited me to dine with him in his elevated abode. I did not feel inclined for a Persian dinner-party, yet, unwilling to appear unfriendly, I dare not decline.

I have only once regretted accepting the invitation, but the regret commenced a few hours afterwards and has been a lasting one. We were met at the drawbridge by the illustrious governor *en personne*, surrounded by a host of swarthy Yezdicastees, who were his acknowledged vassals, and who appeared surprised at my dress, and exhibited, by their looks and actions, the greatest curiosity. We were then conducted along a number of subterranean passages which were very narrow and irregular. Two men were in advance of the procession carrying torches. At each step I either tumbled against the wall, or my head would come in violent contact with the roof, which was too low to admit of any one but a dwarf walking erect. After an exclamation of pain or disgust from me, they would in chorus yell out that the son of a dog who built the streets had made them too low, and that I must mind my most noble head. Many times I wished myself out of it,

but having proceeded so far I could not return.

At last, after painfully traversing these unearthly passages for—as it appeared to me—almost an hour, we arrived before a low door, at which the ketkhoda pointed, saying: 'Bismillah, sahib!' (welcome; or, 'In the name of God, sir!') I entered, after again bumping my cranium on the door-post, and saw two of his wives busily engaged in boiling rice, etc.

In the same squalid room was a little child—who, on seeing me, gave evidence of possessing some lusty lungs—muddling in dirt; a few fowls and a calf. On my sudden appearance, the women hastily took up their body-clothing (nothing else was at hand) and pulled it over their faces to screen themselves from my impure gaze, preferring to expose some other portion of their bodies rather than allow an infidel Feringhee to see such celestial countenances as were there portrayed.

I was then led into another room, where the kalyun, sherbet, coffee and fruit were brought by the ladies, who studiously avoided my eyes, retiring as quickly as possible.

I need not describe our dinner; the pillau, curries, fruit, and the pipe of peace, each was brought in turn, and a man was then despatched for the village musicians; but I pleaded fatigue, and asked permission to return to the chapar khaneh.

After the many meaningless compliments from the guests present, and receiving their obsequious salaams, I was conducted back to the entrance, and after another series of stumblings and bumps, I once more breathed pure air.

The smells emitted by most Persian villages are not of the most odoriferous kind, but I shall always consider Yezdicast excels them all; all other villages which I have had the misfortune to enter were deliciously sweet compared to this. The filthy, putrid atmosphere

had succeeded in giving me a racking headache; and, thinking of the old maxim that prevention is better than cure, I took a good dose of Dr. Browne's chlorodyne—an invaluable medicine in the East, where attacks of dysentery, cholera, etc., are so prevalent, and which has proved efficacious in not a few obstinate cases. I have used it with great success on the nomadic tribes of Central Persia.

The stage from Yezdicast to Maksulbeg is another dreary march. Whilst at Yezdicast I heard something which I had not the opportunity, nor yet the inclination, to prove; the ketkhoda solemnly assured me that 'bread of Yezdicast, wine of Shiraz, and a woman of Yezd, must make happy the life of man.' I ventured to doubt this statement, but being ignorant of practical experience I did not venture beyond this.

The twenty-four miles' march to the Maksulbeg post-house was finished when, as I was

dismounting, the British Legation courier from Teheran arrived, carrying the English mail to Shiraz, but the officer in charge at Ispahan, thinking the courier might possibly pass us unnoticed, had detained all letters addressed to me until my arrival there. Here was a disappointment, but Ispahan was not far off; the thought was consoling. As the fluid of golden hue tipped the eastern horizon, as the forerunner of that glorious source of warmth, which was necessary that morning as I tremblingly sat in the saddle outside the chapar khaneh, we moved away towards the telegraph station at Koomeshah, a large village twelve miles distant. The morning was bitterly cold; the gradual and perceptible difference in the climate, as we journeyed northwards, was felt in the early morning and after sunset. The road here runs at the very base of a chain of mountains, which extend as far as the eye can reach eastward one magnificent unbroken range, running to the confines of Beloochistan. While

yet some miles from Koomeshah, the road abruptly branched northwards, the scenery, which had been previously hidden from us by a projecting hill, was most picturesque. At our right were gardens, vineyards, and groves of orange-trees, well-watered by a tributary river winding its course serpent-like through their midst. In the far distance, running through mountainous sandy country, was the road to Teheran.

At our left lay the fanatical village of Koomeshah. The zigzag road, immediately outside the place, and windings, turnings, and endless crossings, were to me totally incomprehensible, one bridge spanning a narrow stream would have made straight the road; but instead of this, one must ride two miles round and come to the same place again, the only difference being that the second time we are at the right side of the water.

In the morning, when I was ready for leaving, my servant came to me with a doleful

look on his face, saying the muleteer was absent, and we therefore could not proceed until the next day. Towards evening the delinquent put in an appearance (he was a native of this place), and in a most piteous tone told me that he had been detained in performing the last rites to a lamented mother, who had, the previous day, 'shuffled off this mortal coil.' Such an excuse was of course satisfactory, but had I been, at the time, aware that his sainted parent had several times previously committed the same indiscretion, and that he had confessed to burying her on half a dozen different occasions, Mr. Charvodar would undoubtedly have come to grief. He, in a grave tone, informed me that he was then, with my permission, going to the grave, there to bewail his bereavement. About sunset he was seen at his own house, deeply partaking of the cup which cheers and also inebriates, with others who, perhaps, had also lost a mother, and were uniting their sympathies.

Myer was our next stage, twenty-three miles. After passing along the sandy rocky road for more than half the distance, the scene is again changed. Gardens, prettily situated, and which extend for miles in the direction of Ispahan, mark the route to Myer. The surrounding scenery is lovely: villages and gardens, majestic trees, crowned with the beautiful foliage of spring; the gentle murmurings of the distant river, form a lively contrast to the dreary barrenness which had been our morning's portion, and which we had been continuously traversing for upwards of one hundred and forty miles.

We left Myer shortly after midnight, in order to reach Ispahan about noon; thirty-six miles would complete our journey to the ancient capital of the Persian Empire. The keen frosty air, from the snow-capped hills westward of Ispahan compelled me to seek for warmer stirrups than the steel ones of my saddle. I had two camel's nose-bags, half-

filled with straw, tied and flung across the pommel of my hunting-saddle, and into these I put my half-frozen feet; a good-sized camel's-hair rug was thrown over this, but even then the piercing cold made the saddle untenable; so I dismounted, and until sunrise walked briskly over the hard frozen road. A colder morning than this I never remember—not even in the northern wilds of Turkestan.

Some four miles from Ispahan is a lofty range of hills, which completely hide the city until close upon it; on reaching the summit, the view is one of the most picturesque and imposing of any in Persia. A few miles distant, built in the centre of a vast plain full of rich cultivation, well watered by that river so famous in the native song and story, the Zeinderud, running at angles with the plain. Surrounding the city is a stupendous chain of mountains branching from the Elburz range. And all around is dotted small villages, which embrace the twofold advantages of protection from the

city, should their property be in danger of marauding bands of Arabs, and the extreme richness of the country. The scene is made more romantic and Orientalised by the numerous pigeon-towers which are erected in and around the city; they are built for the purpose of collecting the guano, which is deemed the finest manure for melon-growing; one thing is certain: the finest melons of the East are grown at Ispahan and Kashan; they are called 'Tokhm-i-känd,' or 'seed of the sugar.'

As I viewed the city from this place, the morning sun shining brilliantly on all the surroundings, unclouded by the black wreaths of smoke so familiar in an English town, and listening in vain for the deafening noises of machinery, I could imagine the enraptured gaze of the poet as he proudly viewed the place from this point, and sang its praises in the following strain: 'Ispahan nesfeh jahan; agar Ispahan na bud, jahan na bud,' ('Ispahan is half the world; if there was no Ispahan,

there could be no world'). Another poet (Hajee Samuz), more patriotic than the rest, likens the parents of Ispahan to the starry heavens in all their splendour, but adds that the child is by far the fairest. Such is the native laudation of the city we had now reached.

The entrance to Ispahan, or rather Djulfa, as this portion of the city is called, is through innumerable well-watered yet narrow and irregular lanes. The Christian population—mostly Armenians—numbering about two thousand, reside here. It is the only Christian settlement in Persia. The name Djulfa was probably given by the earlier settlers, who came from the town of that name in Armenia.

In passing along these lanes I was most agreeably surprised at hearing a sweet-sounding 'Good-morning, sir,' from almost every youth who happened to see me. These children are taught by the Rev. Mr. Bruce,

in a splendid school but recently completed. This kind-hearted gentleman is the only English clergyman in Persia, tolerated only on account of the Christian settlement at Djulfa. Nobly and faithfully does he fight against the numerous obstacles which are ever crowding in his path: the Romish priests, the Armenian bishop, and lastly, but not least, native fanaticism, coupled with the bitter hatred of the moolahs, who are strictly jealous of any new doctrine being introduced into the country, or the blessings of Christianity being made known to their ignorantly enthusiastic followers, are in their turn to be battled with; and on more than one occasion has Mr. Bruce —even when (lamentable to say) unaided and retarded by his country's mission in Teheran, rendered almost helpless by those who are in duty bound to protect him—come off more than a victor.

On one occasion, when ignored by the British Ambassador, who not courteously re-

fused even a reply to the missionary's appeal for protection and justice, he (Mr. Bruce) was compelled to communicate with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in London, demanding the protection which the British flag affords. Redress and safety were then demanded of the Shah for this noble-hearted gentleman, and were forthwith given. After great and almost forcible opposition, the new schools were built and opened; even then this irascible system of persecution was carried on by the parties who were averse to the Divine Truth being taught, who were encouraged by the openly neglectful manner in which Mr. Bruce was treated at Teheran. The foremost of the band of persecutors was the so-called minister of religion—the reverend father in God—the Romish priest—who, by all the deceitful, hypocritical devices in his power, sought to unseat the Protestant champion.

The schools are now in a flourishing con-

dition. Mr. Bruce is not a little aided in all his duties by his good lady, who has won the admiration and deep respect of all those who, in passing through or residing in Persia, have been honoured by an introduction to the missionary's family.

CHAPTER IX.

National Decay.—Inoffensive Ooroos.—Zinderood.—Festivities.—Moharrum.—Alas, Hossein!—Bottled Tears.—God is Great.—Gathering Manna.—Moochikhor Plain.—Bolting.—Accident.—Imaum Zada.—Sacred Fish.—Kohrood.—Industrious Villagers.—Swiss Scenery.—Smelling the Desert.—Kashan.—Scorpions.—Duped.—'What Pushed it Along.'—Tragedy.

ISPAHAN, the once famous capital of Irān, contains some of the finest relics of ancient architecture to be found in the empire; but, like all other things in Persia, these grand old palaces and mosques are now in irremediable ruin.

During the civil wars and contentions of petty chiefs, rebellious and insurrectionary factions, which have for ages ravished and

laid waste the country, all ideas of national pride and honour in the preservation of public buildings, etc., have been forgotten, and, such is still the case. No one in Persia thinks it necessary to repair or even preserve what was once the lauded glory of their land. From Bushire in the south to Resht in the north, or from Teheran to the Turkish frontier, no one ever heard of any notice being taken of the continuous decay of either buildings or land, and to picture a land whose people are entirely void of the least semblance of national pride or dignity, is to picture a country already doomed to the invader's ruthless hand, to the tyrannical aggression of native chiefs and governors, and to perpetual ignorance.

Persia is no exception, and when we consider that their nearest neighbour is the harmless, inoffensive, but withal christianising and humanising 'Ooroos'—as the Russians are called by all Orientals—we may expect a similar fate for Persia as fell to the kingdom

of Armenia, to the independent Khanates of Central Asia, and even to a Persian province.

One of the finest views in Ispahan, so seldom seen in a Persian town, is the beautiful wide-flowing river—the Zeinderud—the waters of which are carried or led away to irrigate the surrounding country. This continuous and plentiful supply of water in some degree accounts for the rich productions of the district around Ispahan. The gardens are of the finest in Persia, as previously stated. The perfection in which grapes and melons are grown cannot be equalled in Asia.

The river is crossed, at four places in and near the city, by splendid bridges of ancient build; and a most delightful scene it is, on some Mahomedan festival, to see the city assemble all its wealth and poverty on the river's bank. Gaily dressed ladies, whose merry laughter and chatter can be heard from behind the long veil which effectually screens them from all impure gaze; Persian gentle-

men with their extensive retinues, who pass away the latter part of the day in idle gossip and rose-flavoured smoke from the kalyun; muleteers; merchants with their white-turbaned heads and long robes; dervishes, with long, thickly matted hair and filthy-looking garments, who continually yell 'God is great!' camel-drivers in their peculiar tight-fitting dress and laced-up legs, and fakeers in ragged attire, with all sorts and conditions of men, make this their favourite retreat, and a walk or ride on the banks of the Zeinderud, in Moharrum, or on the 'Ade-i-nau-rooz' (New Year's Day), is not easily forgotten.

It was the month of mourning—Moharrum—when I passed through Ispahan. All over were tents erected by the wealthier class for the purpose of publicly lamenting the murder of Hossein, the son of Ali.

During this season of lamentation the people are worked up to a pitch of excitement seldom witnessed. The moolahs relate to the

assembled crowds how Hossein bravely fought against an overwhelming foe for the succession of the Khalifate, and how he was most basely murdered by his enemies. The crowd of people, at this juncture of the recital, rock themselves to and fro like some huge wave, smiting their breasts, and crying out, in anguish of spirit, 'Alas, Hossein! Alas, Hossein!'

On the anniversary of his death, an effigy of Omar, the Turks' patron saint, is erected in a prominent part of the city, and is, at a sign from the moolahs, burnt, amid the execrations of an excited and fanatical mob.

On this day, called the 'Rooz-i-katl,' the excited populace reach the verge of insanity, their wild, animal-like feelings finding vent in gashing themselves with short swords, whilst the blood streams down their dress from these self-inflicted wounds. The wailings of the women on this day of lamentation are something awful in their hideousness—at times, when the priest is reciting some pathetic story

of the sainted Imaum's life, their shrieks and groans are indescribable.

These assemblies are held at every important house in each town, friends and relations meeting together to mingle their sorrows and sympathies on the great loss sustained by the Imaum's death, which occurred centuries ago.

The belief is prevalent that on this day all past sins are atoned for. The tears shed on these occasions are often preserved in bottles or jars, the Persians using them as a certain cure for disease, when everything else has proved ineffectual. When, however, death occurs after the use of this elixir of life, the usual expression is that 'God is great!'

Connected with this festival of Hossein's death is a tale which speaks of an Englishman having interceded for Hossein's life at the hands of his persecutor, Yezeed. From this supposed circumstance a better feeling is ex-

hibited towards Englishmen in Persia than might otherwise be expected.

The utter absurdity of this story, however, is apparent when we know that Yezeed was entirely ignorant of the young man's death until his gory head was brought to him (Yezeed) by his victorious general. The Khalif was exceedingly sorry and angry at the death of the last of Ali's family, exclaiming, at the sight of the bloody trophy, 'Ah, Hossein! I would they had spared thee!'—undoubtedly feeling in his Moslem mind that a great sin had been committed in wilfully destroying one of the few surviving direct descendants of the great Prophet. And also when we know the impossibility of an Englishman being in that country at the time spoken of.

In the large towns these celebrations frequently terminate in a free fight between Sunnies and Shahies; weapons are freely used, sometimes resulting in one or two being killed.

Ispahan is noted for its copper work and carving on brass. The climate is very genial, the heat in summer being not much more than in England. It is the seat of a provincial government, like Shiraz.

After a delay of four days, we once again journeyed northwards. I had some difficulty in leaving the city, on account of these religious ceremonies being a source of great attraction to all zealous Mussulmans. My muleteers were inclined to prove obstructive to my intentions of leaving; but once through the gates and on the road, all gloominess and discontent vanished, and the thought of the village ceremonies, where they, being townsmen, would act a leading part, was uppermost in their minds.

The bazaars at Ispahan are extensive, but, like other towns, they are but indifferently maintained. The great lack of sewerage is the greatest necessity in Eastern cities, and more especially in the hot stifling atmosphere

of the closely packed buildings of the narrow bazaar. All kinds of fetid nuisances are thrown unnoticed in the much-frequented lanes of these Eastern market-halls, but which bear a much more romantic name than our common English term.

The road from 'Half the World' to Gez, our next stage, is through an interesting country—at least, for some miles outside the city gardens and large melon-fields line the route; but these, with their many water-courses, are soon left behind, and a salt plain marks the nearer approach to Gez, only sixteen miles from what should be a large mark on our maps of the world—the city.

The village derives its name from the large number of tamarisk trees or bushes which grow in its neighbourhood; and under the leaves of this tree the manna of the Israelites, called in Persian 'gez,' is found. It is in appearance similar to dew, but of a greenish hue. A cloth is spread under the bush, which is

shaken; the manna falls off, and is thus gathered, and when mixed with flour and split almonds, makes an agreeable sweetmeat. It is always gathered in the early morning with great caution.

The road to this little village is under somewhat bad repute, many travellers having, in the darkness, lost their way. Such was not the case with our party. We left Ispahan about noon, and arrived here long before sunset.

From Gez to Moochikhor was an unpleasant, dreary ride: the rain was falling in drizzling showers, accompanied by a biting wind from the Kohrood hills. The long salt plain appeared a vast desert, but as all things, pleasant or otherwise, necessarily have an end, so had the ride to Moochikhor.

It was late in the day when we arrived at the house of an Armenian merchant who had invited us to stay with him. I was accompanied by an Armenian lady, the wife of

the inspector at Soh, our next station. She left Ispahan under my protection, as the roads were reported not altogether safe. The lady travelled in a takhtravan, unexposed to the pelting rains which fell—I myself was literally soaked through, and was glad to find a little solace beneath my bedding (which had been protected from the rain) in the cosy little room assigned to me by our hospitable host.

In the morning we saddled up early and moved off. A motley crowd had gathered to witness our departure : tottering old men and women ; young urchins, entirely nude, were skipping about like so many squirrels to catch a glimpse at the Feringee lady ; men and women, half naked, stood by motionless, apparently awestruck at the sight.

Just at the moment I attempted to mount my horse—a high-spirited Arab—a movement in the crowd caused him to rear, and I, rather lame at the time, had a narrow escape of being thrown headlong into the crowd. Another

moment, and with a bound he started along the road at a racing speed, frightened at the noise made by so many people. When he thought proper to stop, we were some five miles from the village, and of course alone. Our caravan was not long in coming up, and we proceeded on to Soh, where we were met by the inspector, who warmly welcomed us, a short distance from the telegraph office.

Owing to an accident sustained at Ispahan whilst racing, I was obliged to rest here two days. We had been out for a ride, and in course of conversation spoke of the qualities of the animals which we bestrode, ending in a race of two miles. When nearing the post, and some dozen yards ahead, I noticed several donkeys carrying bricks approaching; turning my horse opposite to these brutes, I should have passed, had not one ass, more stupid than the rest, swerved from his chosen path and placed himself in my way. Too late to pull up, I tried to pass it, but in doing so caught

one brick with my leg; the donkey and the load of bricks went with a crash, whilst I got a severe cut on my right leg, but won the race.

A short distance from the inspector's house at Soh is the Imam Zada, or sacred tank, containing a number of fish equally holy. To this consecrated spot we paid a prolonged visit, and received, in copious showers, the blessings of the venerable patriarch, who is the leader of a small community of devout dervishes resident there; but to be the happy recipient of such divine favours one must first purchase from an attendant dervish a few small loaves of thin sacred bread wherewith to feed the fishes.

To my own mind it was evident, by the manner in which these rapacious animals swallowed the bread, that such visits were few and far between; perhaps the fish were supposed to be of divine origin, and thereby not requiring subsistence allowance. After

purchasing some half-dozen loaves, which should have satisfied three times their number, we left them open-mouthed and quite content with their treatment.

Such holy places are frequently met with in the East. The buildings are uniformly erected in the shape of a small mosque, and guarded in a like manner by some pious dervish; but, unlike a mosque, the feet of the infidel are allowed to tread the sacred portals —but for such condescension some donation is expected, either by the doorkeeper or the inmates — usually both. Curiosity is easily satisfied: the interior is a vile loathsome den, unfit for habitation; but for experience one is supposed to pay.

From Soh to Kohrood was our next march. The road runs through exquisite mountain scenery—defiles and passes, descending and ascending, ever climbing. Upward and onward seems to be, or should be, the motto of the Kohroodees; from the time of leaving Soh

it was but a series of ups and downs until, near sunset, I saw in the distance a few small huts, which turned out to be the suburbs of Kohrood.

In ascending and descending the zigzag, wearisome path, I noticed a stream which we crossed and recrossed until I forgot to count. The last one I took was thirty-six; but I saw the same stream several times again before reaching the rest-house.

Kohrood is pleasantly situated at an elevation of 9,500 feet above sea-level; and after the parching, sultry air of the two or three previous stages, the cheery sound of the rippling water, as it dashes foaming against the huge piles of rock, is pleasant indeed. Whilst still studying the beauties of the surrounding landscape, the chapar khaneh came in sight, amidst a grove of richly blossomed trees, which give a certain halo to the hitherto understood and experienced loneliness of such places.

Kohrood, unlike most places in Persia, can justly boast of an industrious class of people—the well cultivated fields and gardens in its vicinity speak admirably of the diligence and praiseworthy labours of these isolated villagers.

For two or three miles at either side of the village the caravan track runs by the side of the Kohrood gardens, which at the time I passed were in full blossom, emitting most fragrant odours. One wishes with a sigh that such scenery could be found throughout the country; but unfortunately it is not so, and one is tempted to linger for a short time amid such natural beauty.

All around are gigantic mountains, over which the eagles majestically soar and the hawks pursue their sport; while far below lies this sequestered little hamlet, entirely clad in the gay colours of nature. A few yards below is a magnificent lake of pure blue mountain water, into which the stream alluded

to empties itself. The scenery is unsurpassed or unequalled in Persia, and could set at defiance the lauded beauties of Switzerland; it is worthy of the painter's brush or the poet's gaze.

Leaving this enchanting spot, we wound our way down the mountain defiles, which in the summer time are a rare haunt for the lawless bands of Bakhtiaries who infest the neighbourhood.

Leaving Gabrabad, a caravanserai half-way to Kashan, we gradually descend the hill-side, a somewhat laborious procedure, as it is also a lengthy one. On reaching the summit of a small curved eminence in the road, a scene is presented before us, grand in its sublime quietude. About two miles lower down the declivity is one extremity of the great Central Asian desert, which ends only on the far-distant borders of Afghanistan. The sand, curled up in fantastically shaped heaps, gives an appearance of a stormy sea

lashing the waves against some massive wall.

Most fortunately our route is not in this direction, and we are spared the evils of desert travelling until within a short distance of the capital. The road into Kashan may be compared to riding along the sea coast : at our feet are the deep furrows and the small heaps of sand from the desert ; across the immensity of space comes the dry, arid atmosphere, which to smell is sufficient.

Kashan, a famous city in Persian history, has since the time of its highest glory deteriorated to an alarming extent. Its glories now consist in its fame as a silk and copper emporium, and also in the fact that scorpions abound to an extent quite unappreciated by its peaceful inhabitants.

For my own part, well it was that I had learned the cautious method of examining my bed before seeking repose, for on lifting up my pillow I found that I had most unmistak-

ably been forestalled by two tremendous black scorpions. They quickly paid the penalty of such unceremonious intrusion.

A friend of mine, who frequently visits Kashan, was on one occasion retiring to his bed on the roof, and feeling extremely fatigued, wished for a good night's rest, free from mosquitoes, scorpions, etc. He took the usual precaution to closely examine his bedding, and finding the road clear, slipped into it. Scarcely, however, had he composed his weary limbs, when a sharp bite caused him to spring with more than usual agility, and with a cry of pain, from his retreat; and without waiting to take summary vengeance on his unseen assailant, he quickly descended to a lower room, where he had left a bottle of native spirits (arrack), and as an antidote against the poison, he drank most of the fiery contents, which speedily had the desired effect—*viz.*, intoxication.

On an examination of the bed it was found

that the sudden pain had been caused, not by a scorpion, but by a pin, which had by some means got firmly fixed in the bed-linen. My friend was some time before he entirely recovered from the effects of such potent imbibition, and not at all pleased at being so severely duped.

The following morning we left the mountainous region of Kashan behind, and travelled across the uninteresting plain leading to Sin-Sin, where we arrived early in the day. On the road I had heard my servants and the muleteers discussing the feasibility and the desirability of a railroad through Persia. My servant, Mahomed Saduk—the only one of the debaters who had seen a railway—declared that it would be a great blessing, if Allah would so will.

After a most elaborate description from Mahomed Saduk to his attentive hearers as to the speed of an engine and the qualities of its going-power, one man asked how much

corn it would eat in a day. Another question was that if the engine was iron and neither a camel nor a mule before it, what pushed it along ? (! !)

A number of similar questions were put, all of which my man satisfactorily answered. Although they did not believe a word he said, still, in their estimation, he was a learned man, in consequence of his being a Hindoo and having seen an 'iron road,' as the Persians call the railway.

From Sin-Sin we travelled on to Pasangun, where we halted for breakfast. A ruined village is Pasangun—not a living thing near it; at least, not one large enough to be seen.

At this place a sergeant of Royal Engineers was shot: the man had been recklessly drinking spirits, in consequence of the death of a comrade who had been shot near Shiraz; this so affected the man's brain, that a fit of *delirium tremens* was the result, in which he imagined

every man to be a robber. In one of these fits he shot an inoffensive man at Pasangun; the dead man's son took up a gun and immediately put an end to the poor sergeant's life. The morning following this twofold tragedy, there was not a single soul to be found in the village, and to this day it remains a deserted place, shunned by all.

CHAPTER X.

Koom.—Holy Shrines. — Barber's Bridge. — Ill-famed Winds.—The King's Well.—The Valley of the Shadow of Death.—Turkestan Deserts.—Kinarigird.—Distinguished Arrivals.—Prompt Action.—Bone of Contention.—Demavend.—Friends. —Teheran.—Rumours.—Fifteenth Century Waggons.—Government Caravanserai. — Gulahek. — Medical Practitioners. — An Outcast.

EAVING the scene of this wretched encounter, we proceeded on towards the sacred city of Koom. Approaching this city of shrines, we once more pass through cultivated land — water - courses abound, as at Ispahan, whilst a considerable distance from the city gates the golden dome of Koom's most sacred mosque gleams in the sunlight. Here are buried Fatima, the sister of

Imaum-i-Reza, Fath Ali Shah, a celebrated monarch of Persia, and several other equally illustrious bygones.

Koom is the most fanatical place in Persia. The foot of an unbeliever would not be allowed to pollute the floor of this holiest of holies—even the gaze of a detested Feringee on this temple of Islamism would be resented by fierce looks and gestures from the murderous-looking dervishes, who never leave the divine boundary.

Only once has it been known that an Englishman or any other unbeliever obtained permission to visit the jewelled Tombs of Persia's illustrious kings; then the deception was only known by a few moolahs. The Englishman was a great favourite with the Koomees, on account of his toleration and apparent inclination to Mahomedanism.

The internal sights are said to be most magnificent; but even these facts have never been revealed. Indian princes, Persian kings

and nobles, have laid before the shrine rich gifts of precious stones and gold.

The city itself is rapidly falling into decay. One notable feature in Koom is the number of storks which build their nests far up in the towers of the mosques, and which are held sacred by its inhabitants. The tomb of Fath Ali Shah is situated outside the city. Koom is now chiefly noted for its earthenware manufactories, coloured tiles, etc., of which some are good specimens of art.

From Koom we know that for days we shall see nothing but dreary wastes, unvaried except by the arrivals at and departures from the different menzils, but as we are fast nearing the end of our journey, half the monotony of such travelling is lost upon us, at the thought of rest, and the finis of all our troubles and the roughing which must of necessity attend a journey of nearly a thousand miles through one of the most barren and uncivilised countries in the world.

The view from the roof of the Pūl-i-Dalork ('Barber's Bridge') chapar khaneh is one of wild beauty: the wide rushing river, which flows alongside the post-house, is seen in the far-off distance like a stream of pure silver encircling the brown sandy plain; and as the sun sank behind the western hills, the sandy plain, and the majestic hills in the distance, lent a beauty to the scene beyond description. In appearance it was a lake of gold divided by a stream of the baser metal, which could be seen persistently entwining itself until lost in the trackless limits of the great Asiatic Sahara: far away beyond all the rest the snow-capped peak of Demavend rose high towards the heavens. We first saw this king of Persian mountains at Kashan, more than a hundred miles away.

I stood gazing on this scene, and thinking of the green pastures and blossoming trees of my native land, until I was awakened from my somewhat pleasant reverie by a servant, who

said that the night winds from the desert were of ill-fame, and advised me to seek solace in the chapar khaneh, which, I may say, is not the best of its kind.

The door rejected all attempts on my part to close it; the windows, if I may so name them, were entirely destitute of anything in the shape of glass. Eventually, I had some boulders brought from below to hold the door in its place—the wind was so keen that I was afraid to sleep fully exposed to its blasts.

A murderous-looking dervish had once or twice paid a visit to the roof; the second time I pointed towards the steps, and politely asked him to retire. With apparent disinclination and black looks he complied.

The next stage was to Hous-i-Sultan ('The King's Well'), built by Shah Abbas for the convenience of pilgrims to and from Koom. The chapar khaneh and caravanserai—the latter in ruins—are the only signs of habitations seen since Pūl-i-Dalork.

The continual sameness rendered the ride most wearisome. From Hous-i-Sultan to Kinarigird is the most desolate, comfortless spot it is possible to picture. Nay, to picture it is impossible. No one can form an idea of this valley of dry bones unless first traversing its length. The whole distance from Koom—eighty-two miles—is an unbroken expanse of sand. Not even a blade of withered grass or a dried up thistle is to be seen. Between Hous and Kinarigird, however, is by far the worst part of the journey. It is called by the Persians 'The Valley of the Shadow of Death,' and as far as the eye can reach in an easterly direction, nothing is seen but this wide expanding desert, terminating only at the base of the mountains of Afghanistan, and reaching northwards beyond the confines of the once independent khanates. In fact, but with few and slight changes, the great Persian desert and the steppes of Turkestan and Siberia might be mentioned as one and the same.

The thousands of acres inhabited only by wild Turcomans, and equally wild and barbarous Cossacks, entirely destitute of even a ray of civilisation or of cultivation, is to the mind of a citizen of some densely populated European city a matter of deep wonderment.

Kinarigird is the last stage from the capital of the Medes and Persians, and it was with no small amount of satisfaction that I entered the chapar khaneh of this, my last night on the road.

The night was an exceptionally fine one, and I, feeling in a much better humour than of late, took advantage of the privileges of the bala khaneh's occupant, and was soon enjoying (in slippers and loose jacket) the beauties of an Eastern moonlight, as also of a good dinner on the roof.

Shortly after I had finished my repast and was calmly pulling at the stem of a kalyun, I heard a loud knocking at the outer door, and on looking over the wall from my elevated position, saw that, by all appearances, a Persian

of high rank had arrived—the number of his attendants pronounced him as such.

The chaper-chee, or man in charge of the house, on opening the door, was peremptorily ordered to clear the bala khaneh. This is the best room of the building; it is a second storey, built to exclude all nauseous smells from the stables, etc., and for privacy; it is only given to distinguished travellers.

The man replied that it was already occupied by a sahib. To this reply the khan gave an unmistakable token of disgust, by threatening to burn my father, and all my worthy ancestors, unless I allowed him, a star of greater magnitude, to take up his quarters in the bala khaneh. All this was spoken unsuspicious of my close presence.

The next minute I heard the man ascending the steps, and was informed, with a profound salaam, that His Excellency Hajee Ahmed Khan, who was then travelling to Koom with orders for the Governor, had arrived, and

wished to have this room. Not a word was uttered as to the alternative of my refusal.

I told the man to carry to His Excellency my salaams, and trusted that his shadow would never grow less, and that his nose was fat; but, at the same time, I regretted my inability to accede to his request. Should he, however, condescend to wait until morning, the room would in all probability be at his service.

The man retired, but soon returned, this time accompanied by three others, who insolently demanded my immediate departure. My servants just then appeared, and in less than one minute the roof was cleared of these noisy intruders: two of the men I assisted downstairs in a much quicker manner than which they ascended. One man, in his haste to reach the bottom, jumped from the roof—about ten feet. Language peculiarly adapted to the Persian tongue was used by my men in ejecting them from the building, not showing much tenderness during the operation.

I heard no more until about retiring, when Mahomed Saduk came to say that the Khan *en personne* wished to see me.

I gave the customary 'Bismillah,' and was soon *vis à vis* with this imperial messenger. He assured me that he was altogether ignorant of the insult offered me by his servants, until complained of by my man. He wished me to forgive them, stating that punishment had already been inflicted.

Whether this was literally true or not I cannot say, but after smoking a kalyun together, we parted on the best of terms. I offered to vacate the wished-for room, but either from a sense of shame, should he accept, or, as he professed, from respect to my exalted position, he politely declined.

The following morning, before the great orb of day had spread its golden light around, we left this bone of contention for our last march of thirty miles to Teheran, the capital of the Shadow of the Universe.

After passing through the intricate mountain paths near Kinarigird, we arrived just as the sun made its appearance in the Orient, on the summit of the last hill before descending into the plain of Teheran, the morning was beautifully calm—scarcely a breath of air stirred ; the view from the spot where we stood was truly a picturesque and imposing one.

The lofty snow-covered heights of that great European-Asiatic range of mountains, called the Elburz glistened in the morning sun, and far away, crowning the grandeur by its majestic peak, rose Demavend, that mount of perpetual snow, upwards of 20,000 feet above the sea's level.

The Persian capital lies, as it were, firmly embedded in the very heart of these mountains. As yet it is entirely hidden from us by the rising ground and projecting hills.

All around in the plain below are villages and gardens, their beauty at that time greatly

enhanced by the natural garb of spring. Some fifteen miles away the golden dome of the sacred shrine of Shah Abdul Azim glitters and shines like a far-off star.

One would think, on riding through this magnificent scenery, that the approach to this Asiatic capital was unequalled by any other similar landscape.

At Bagh-i-Hajee Ali, ten miles from the city, I called a halt to refresh and strengthen the inner man—a ride of twenty miles before breakfast had a great tendency to create a sharp appetite.

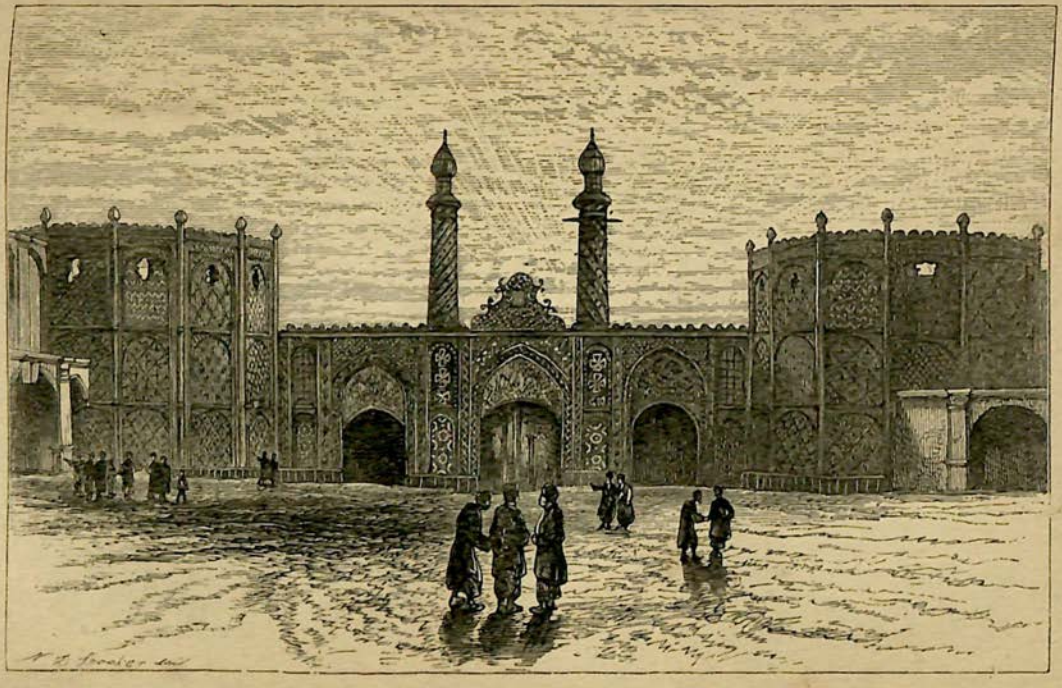
When descending into the plain, one of my stirrups had by some unaccountable means snapped; I was therefore riding at great disadvantage. Fortunately, the month's continuous marching had taken a little spirit out of my Arab, or I should have found another though less comfortable stirrup, *i.e.* terra firma.

On resuming the march, I had scarcely proceeded a mile when my muleteer, who was

ahead, hurried back saying a company of sahibs were riding towards us. I hastened forward, and at the brow of an adjacent hill I met a number of gentlemen who were here stationed, and who expressed their pleasure at receiving me safe and sound after my long journey from the South.

At this point I had my first view of Teheran. I was charmed by its pleasant appearance, but I must confess that the fascination was not of long duration. These favourable impressions, perhaps too hastily made, were shattered to a thousand pieces, on passing through the bazaars leading towards the centre of the city.

We entered by the Shah Abdul Azim gate, and wended our way through the intricacies of the filthy bazaars situated at this portion of the city. We passed the executioner's pole, on which the gory heads of autocratic victims are placed. The king's town palace next met our view. In the front are two immense brass cannons, taken at the siege of Delhi by a



EASTERN GATE AT TEHERAN.

Persian king. Further on, the new college, foreign offices, and other public buildings are passed—all are the fruits of the European tour. We next turn and cross the artillery 'maidon,' or square, full of antiquated brass guns and rotten-looking ammunition waggons; through the artillery gate we pass into the principal street of the capital, by far the finest street in Persia, and the only one of its kind. It is paved with boulders varying in size, indiscriminately thrown on the road, and which painfully reminds one of the rocky road to Dublin.

Ancient looking lamps are placed at either side of the road, lighted at night by native candles, an attempt, peculiarly Persian, to imitate European cities; the candles are supposed to burn throughout the night, but long ere the midnight hour arrives, dismal darkness reigns supreme. It is whispered—but far be it from me to accept the rumour doubting the honesty of Persians—that these candles are taken from the lamps by the soldiery who

guard the street, and sold in the bazaars for bread.

Another story is becoming somewhat stale in the bazaars of Teheran.

The king, a short time after his return from Europe, issued a royal mandate to the Grand Vizier that a candle manufactory was to be erected, forthwith to supply themselves with this useful commodity.

In course of time the structure was completed, and a very elaborate report given to his majesty of the great demand made by the dealers, and of the prosperous state of the concern. A day or two afterwards the Governor of Public Affairs received notice to prepare the manufactory for his majesty's reception. These preparations were of a more lengthy nature than the Shah imagined. For upwards of three months the works had been closed, unknown to the authorities, who continued to receive good accounts of extensive trade, etc.

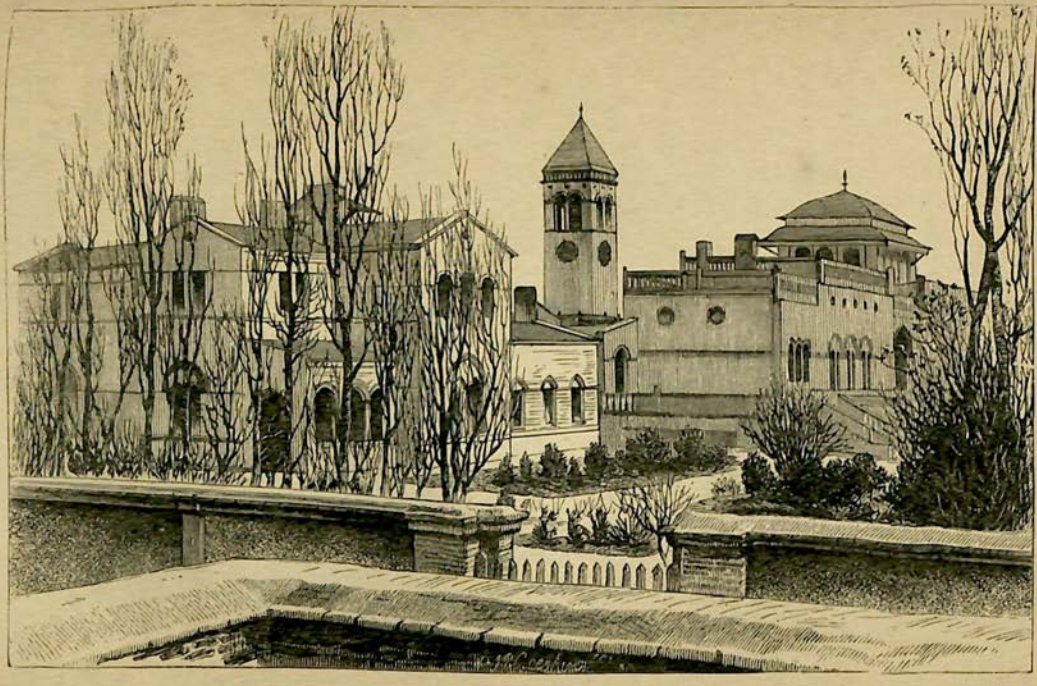
The day of the royal visit arrived, and to

put a good surface on the matter, the manager hired all the water-carriers, hawkers and other street idlers to make candles for that occasion. I may also say that a frequenter of the bazaars would notice on this particular day an entire absence of even the least semblance of a candle —all had been hired by this enterprising Persian to deceive his illustrious visitor. The Shah saw on his arrival a room full of busily engaged workmen—the walls completely covered with the lanky, fatty substance of their industrious labour—and highly complimented the manager on the efficient state of the department.

The pavement, if we may so call it, is specially adapted for the king's 'fifteenth century waggons,' or, as they are called, his 'royal carriages,' which rumble and jolt up the street like the vans of a travelling showman—an infallible remedy for liver complaint. Conversation in an English vehicle is sometimes difficult, but in these imperial waggons the very thought is madness.

In Russia we see and feel what we are unaccustomed to in the shape of street locomotion, nor do we desire to have a repetition; but none can be compared to these carriages, unfurnished with springs, which are generally employed in the transit of the selected ladies of his harem, who are always surrounded and guarded from the impure gaze of man by a ragged rabble called 'Body-guards.'

Not far up this Piccadilly we halted before the doors of a massively built house, in appearance like a caravanserai, both externally and the interior. This I was informed was the Government House, in which my quarters had been selected. The house was in a very dilapidated condition—the court yard was one heap of stones and rubbish, whilst the rooms so kindly allotted to me by a thoughtful and considerate superintendent were unfit to lodge the unclean animal in. I turned with disgust from such dens, and sought out my own



BRITISH LEGATION, TEHERAN.

abode, after being refused allowance for that purpose, and told that quarters were ready for me ; and until the day of leaving the control of such ill-bred officialism, I was compelled to find house-rent, although my contract had been that excellent quarters were furnished by the Indian Government, and, I may say, which had been found, previous to my arrival in Teheran.

In this fashionable street are the various foreign missions—French, Austrian, Turkish, and English, the latter commanding a splendid site, and by far the finest building in Persia. There is also a Roman Catholic Church erected in this European street, as also an hotel kept by a French-German. The central office of the Indo-European Company and the Indian Government Telegraph Department occupies a less prominent position, although, were it not for this department, but few Englishmen would make their home in Persia.

Teheran, unlike other places in the country,

boasts of a mixed European population—the majority of these residents, however, can only be classified as idle vagrants. The little colony of English are to be found during the summer months in Gulahek, a small village seven miles distant from the city.

The climate in this district and around the base of the Elburz range is much pleasanter than in the dry arid plain in which the capital is built, but in this Elysium the *élite* only are allowed to reside.

The grounds around the village were a gift to the British Legation, who retain the right to grant or refuse application for such a privilege; the grant was made by the king, so that the Mission could transfer the seat of government to the cooler shades of Gulahek during the hot summer months. Chiefs of the telegraphs, medical gentlemen and railway contractors reside here, whilst the staff are compelled to remain in the almost suffocating atmosphere of Teheran.

I am under the impression that the Government of India appoint medical officials in order to insure, if possible, the good health of the respective staffs. Notwithstanding this fact, and also that the city gates are closed shortly after sunset, no one being allowed egress or admittance after such time, these medical officers are seldom seen during the day, and certainly not after sunset. Should a member of the staff be suddenly prostrated by fever, cholera, or other prevalent illness after sunset, it would be impossible to gain their assistance until the following morning, when such assistance would in all probability be too late.

There is, however, one English official who, either through a sense of shame or honour, is forbidden to take up his abode here, owing, no doubt, to the great susceptibilities some ladies may have to any infringement of strict moral observances. Thus this desolate outcast is obliged to live solitary and alone in the great city, and is excluded from the innocent

pleasures of a country life. I said alone, yet not alone: there is one other who perhaps at times affords him some enjoyment, or harmless pastime, to his otherwise monotonous existence.

CHAPTER XI.

Teheran Fortifications.—Rhages.—Pretensions.—Hussein Khan.—Military Review!—Two to One.—Summary Punishment.—Mission Guards.—Baron Reuter's Contract. — Russian Intrigues. — Railways. — Eastern Opinions.—England and Russia.—Party Factions.—Leave of Absence.—Sulphuric Springs.—Prevention and Cure.—Vapours.—Perplexing Dilemma.—Torn and Wounded.

TEHERAN is surrounded by a moat some thirty feet in depth. The fortifications are not on an extensive scale, consisting only of the sand and stones thrown from the moat, which in several places is in a most ruinous condition. The heavy winter rains wash down the embankments, which are never substantially repaired. The gates (nine in number) are built of mud-bricks

and enamelled tiles; the doors are stout woodwork, surmounted by strong iron bars, securely fastened by stones. These defences offer no great resistance to a band of desperate men, who could force an entrance at almost any point. Once inside, a few krans, judiciously distributed amongst the guards, would gain admittance to any part of the city. Still, the gates are not, as in other instances, merely a myth.

About ten miles from Teheran are the ruins of Rhey, or Rhages, the ancient capital of Media, the place where Alexander the Great turned from his pursuit of Hyrcus, who, fearing the dreaded powers of the great conqueror, fled the country, and tried to find refuge in the wild mountain-fastnesses of Afghanistan; but at the thought of being overtaken by Alexander, who was in full pursuit, was slain at his own command by an *aide-de-camp*, accepting death rather than capture. Cruelty and torture have ever characterised the history of Persia, and although the present monarch has, or rather

such are his pretensions, accustomed himself to many European customs; yet it is lamentable to know that far above the rest shines that great lust for cruelty—in fact, it appears to be the greatest and ever-rising passion of Orientals.

Hussein Khan, the present Prime Minister, at one time despaired of ever seeing old age. The king was through the intrigues of Hussein Khan's enemies embittered against him, and forbade his entrance into the presence of his Serene Majesty, and after a time, although with apparent reluctance, his execution was determined upon. Hussein Khan by some means heard of this decision of his Majesty, and at once claimed protection from the English Minister, in virtue of being a Knight of the Star of India. The protection was given, and through the influence and power of Her Majesty's Ambassador, Hussein Khan was restored to his former exalted position.

He is, perhaps, the best man in the Shah's

realms fitted for the post he occupies. Like his imperial master, his inclinations lean towards England, and whilst Hussein Khan remains Grand Vizier any alliance with Russia need cause no fear in political circles at home. Still, unfortunately, Hussein Khan's will is not despotic nor is he infinite, and the opinions of other ministers and courtiers who are unquestionably Pro-Russian may be brought with some weight on the subject, and these, coupled with the spurious pretensions of Russia, may have great influence with the king, and perhaps at a not far distant period prove a matter of some anxiety both to the Indian and Home Governments.

The Envoy of Russia at the Persian capital loses no opportunity in assuring his Majesty of the honourable and unwavering interest, his peace-loving Emperor entertains toward his august neighbour—the slightest wish, even childish though it may be, is made law by the Russian Minister.

Not along ago the Shah expressed a desire to hold a grand review of his army. The Ambassador of All the Russias entirely concurred, and offered, should his Majesty condescend to accept it, to ask for Russian officers to prepare and command the manœuvres. The officers were accordingly at once despatched from Tiflis, and arrived in Teheran without delay, not wasting time to suffer the Shah to change his intentions. For some time the drilling was strictly carried on, and the day of the review (!) fixed on. When all was over, the King received the Russian Minister in audience, who loudly praised the army and its equipments, and the review was considered a grand success. The Shah not personally being familiar with that discipline which should control an army, consequently failed to detect the great lack of even an approach to order or discipline, although the troops were declared to be in a grand condition.

I scarcely think that the sight of two ragged and filthy officers riding *one* jaded horse (which appeared to be a total stranger to barley) on a field-day would create any enthusiastic feeling of admiration at Aldershot. Nor would such a scene as I witnessed afford any great theme of conversation, or thrill the heart with patriotic fire—it might certainly prove a great source of official conversation and correspondence.

As the men, dressed in torn yet gaudy clothes, who were playing at soldiers, marched by *en route* for parade, I noticed that one man, whose coat had long since had its day, and was now, or should have been, indisputably the sign of a rag-shop, with two or three buttons short, handed his rifle to a comrade whilst he—the man who would have made a fortune in Petticoat Lane—endeavoured to mend the matter, and also his coat, by tying up the gap with a piece of rag he had but then torn from the inner side of his garment. A non-commissioned officer happened to notice the

man minus his rifle; taking no notice of his forlorn condition, he dragged the unfortunate wretch from amongst the crowd—they cannot be said to walk in rank—and with a tremendous stick he carried belaboured him most unmercifully. This novel instrument of military punishment is carried by all non-commissioned officers.

The above disgraceful spectacle was witnessed by three or four commanding officers of the Persian army, who seemed to take the thing as a good joke. The man thus punished was a 'saku,' or water-carrier, and had been hired for the day to make up the number—as no doubt half the regiment were—and knew nothing of military discipline. Such scenes are not uncommon. Punishment is always inflicted on the spot. Such a thing as a court-martial has not yet put in an appearance in the realms of the Shah. Officers, too, should they incur the displeasure of a superior, are as summarily punished.

There is one thing in Teheran which strikes an observer of occurrences as being remarkable, that is in all the Foreign Missions a body-guard of some half-dozen troopers of each Mission's country are allowed to the Ambassadors by the Persian Government. I said all. The English only form a striking exception. Whether such exception be the fault of our Minister or of the Indian Government (under whose control the Mission is), I am unable to state. Yet, while the Russian Envoy is escorted by six mounted and well-armed Cossacks, the Turkish Minister or Chargé d'Affaires with a like number of well-mounted fellows from Constantinople, the English Minister is noticeable and attractive by his forlorn appearance: he might well be taken as an antiquated medicine-man, instead of her Britannic Majesty's representative at the Court of Persia. Such, however, is not the case with Russia's proud noble; the state and pomp of a prince is his. Whilst the English Government can

be complimented on the magnificent building on which thousands have been lavishly expended, their policy cannot be considered wise nor their influence paramount; prestige suffers to a great extent through this laxity of such affairs, slight as they may be to a European mind. Orientals differ widely from the people of the West; their sense of imaginary grandeur and pomp will carry the day where honesty of purpose, void of outward display, would fall through.

Such is the present state of things in Teheran. England is satisfied by honourably transacting what international business she may have, suffering no thought of the future to disturb her serene repose, allowing Russian influence to have entire command of the Persian mind, whilst she calmly reclines in the feebleness of old age. It is now publicly acknowledged in Persia and Russia that the contract made between the Shah and Baron Reuter would have been carried out had it not been

for the intriguing of Russian diplomacy. The King was advised to abandon the idea as costly and worthless; he was told that the finances of his country would be thereby ruined, that the railway when completed would be of no practical utility. Thus the project was given up at Baron Reuter's expense, who had despatched an entire working staff and material —in fact, all had been prepared for the commencement of the permanent way, when the result of Russia's secret scheming threw all aside. The debt of such costly and foolish experiments has not yet been paid; his Majesty the Shah is still a debtor of a good round sum to Baron Reuter.

This took place in 1875-6. The latest news from Persia states that a railway is to be commenced at once from Teheran to Baghdad under Russian control. This means an enormous expense, which the already shattered finances of Persia can never meet. The Czar will then have a feasible and valid excuse to

pay himself by seizing a strip of territory stretching from Nakshivan to Tabreez, or another piece from the rich provinces of Ghelan or Mazanderan. The road lying between Teheran and the Sultan's Asiatic capital presents to Russian engineering science great and innumerable difficulties. Mountains, miles in extent, must be tunnelled; deserts crossed; and lastly, even supposing that in time all will have a successful termination, it requires more than Persian vigilance to protect the line from the tribes of Bedouins, who are ever turbulent on the road. At the same time, Russia would be preparing for herself, at the expense of Persia, a direct and substantial road from her Circassian capital to Baghdad, whence, by way of Tabreez and Hamadan, the transport of troops would be an easy matter. The railroad would never by any possible means be a financial success. Traffic, either passengers or goods, could not be extensive. Supposing it to connect and form a direct line of railway to

India, the journey from London to Baghdad, *viâ* Russia and Teheran, or *viâ* Constantinople and Teheran, would occupy at least twenty days, whilst from Baghdad, either by steamer or railway, would be eight more; the ordinary passage from London to Bombay is but twenty-one days. So that a railway route, with all its stoppages, changes, and passport rigid observances, can never supersede the present mode of carrying passengers and merchandise to our Eastern dominions. It is said that the railway is to be from the Persian capital to the Asiatic metropolis of Turkey, which is under the British protectorate. If this be true, a treaty must have been signed by the four interested Powers, which is scarcely feasible at the present time of Anglo-Russian squabbles and Turkish settlements. So that, to our mind, the projected railroad is doomed to premature death should it ever have an existence.

The policy of Russia is throughout the East recognised as antagonistic to that of

England, and the result of this great crisis, which is openly commented on by Russian officers as drawing nigh, is looked for and eagerly anticipated by all those who dabble in international policies. England and Russia are spoken of as bitter enemies, and an appeal to arms for Eastern supremacy is entertained as inevitable. Every one knows that the two nations must some day transform the limitless tracks of Turkestan into Asiatic battle-fields, and the victorious army will carry supreme power throughout the whole of Asia.

Perhaps to some who have not been over studious as to the movements of Russia in Central Asia, it would be surprising to them to know the vastness of the territory annexed by that civilising power since 1864; and to those who still tenaciously cling to the virtues of Russia, I would recommend the correspondence between the Russian Government and that of Mr. Gladstone. Russia faithfully promised not to touch Khiva; not to advance her

armies (in occupation) beyond certain limits marked out by Earl Granville, who was then the Foreign Minister. What were those promises made for? To throw England off her guard, to falsify their position and intentions, and on the first opportunity to be broken. Russian troops have occupied Khiva. Russia's armies have advanced leagues beyond the limits of England's sufferances, and instead of being one thousand miles from our north-western frontier, their outposts and the English-trained Sepoy are but three hundred miles apart.

England may never have cause to fear a Russian invasion of India, until India herself is ripe for such invasion; but her intriguing powers, her worthless promises, her indiscriminate falsity, and her patriotic servants in England (who were not born in Russia), may yet prove sources of anxiety, and perhaps bloodshed, and may not turn out mere visions and delusions, as characterised by a staunch supporter of Russia some time ago.

Russian generalship and weight of arms will never prove fatal to England; but party and press factions in our administration are another thing altogether, and will perhaps some day receive far different treatment than they at present are favoured with.

Two or three months after my arrival in Teheran, I obtained leave of absence, and in company of a friend travelled through Mazanderan (the ancient Hyrcania), on towards Turkestan, past the hot springs of Demavend, remaining for a few days in the rich valley of the Lar, which is watered by one of the finest rivers in Persia. We left the capital on the first day of July, and after crossing the barren plain around the city, pitched our tents beneath the spreading trees of Surmanabad, twenty-one miles from the gates. Our second day's march was through uninteresting country, without vegetation or signs of habitation. This second day our tents were erected in a pleasant village called Cheshm-i-Lar, or the Lar

Springs. Here we decided to continue our journey towards the desert of Turkestan, and had some difficulty in getting the camel-drivers any further. The climate here was cool and fresh, greatly different to Teheran; the air was invigorating, and tempted us to remain a few days, amusing ourselves by shooting and fishing. Rugs and furs were beginning to come in useful at night, when the cold was greatly felt. Our next encampment was at the base of Giant Demavend. The country around is richly cultivated, and produces in abundance corn, oats, and barley (cotton and opium being but seldom seen in these northern districts). The cornfields were all of a rich golden hue, the gardens full of luscious fruits, and the green pastures and rushing river reminded me for the first time during my residence in Persia of far-off England, and had it not been for the miserable buildings, flat roofs, and swarthy-looking peasants, we could have fancied ourselves in some quiet Lincolnshire hamlet. Our

tents had been pitched in an orchard of walnut-trees, not more than a dozen yards from the foaming River Lar.

About seven miles away from Ask are the boiling springs of Demavend. These sulphuric waters boil up from the subterranean passages around the mountain. Near the well is a rudely-constructed bath-room, which in the native mind should be held sacred, in virtue of the healing and curative powers of the waters. Out of curiosity we entered, and thought of bathing in this ill-looking place. We were quickly satisfied of its assuasive powers, but as prevention is said to be better than cure, we thought it better to retire.

Our walk had in a marked degree improved our appetites; our servant was despatched to some neighbouring tents for bread, milk, and eggs. The latter were put in a cloth and dropped in the boiling well, which we thought just the thing. On breaking the shell, however, we found to our disappointment that the

sulphuric action on the eggs had rendered them unfit for food, so we were contented, after a fashion, with our leather-like bread and sour milk.

These springs go far to prove that the subterranean caverns of Demavend are still agitated by the currents which once resulted in volcanic eruption. The atmosphere in the caves around the crater is exceedingly high and unhealthy; the vapours arising from the action of subterranean heat make it impossible to remain inside more than an hour or so; the fact is established that Demavend was at one period of its existence a volcano of great magnitude, and the fear entertained of its one day bursting forth in terrible fury is not to be despised.

After a few days spent in this charming spot (in comparison to Teheran), we left for the valley of the Lar. The day previous to our departure I had a narrow escape of falling some hundreds of feet. I had started out

alone with my rifle in search of some wild goats which I had seen grazing at the side of Demavend. After an hour's ceaseless climbing, and without seeing anything in the shape of game, I was about to retrace my steps, when, on turning round, I saw, far above me, some twenty goats skipping along the slippery paths. I at once followed cautiously, and did not notice the road I was taking. When within about a hundred yards of the herd, I fired, fetching down one fine kid. A second shot was impossible, and I tried to reach the spot where the fallen victim lay. My astonishment was great at finding that it was almost impossible for anything but a goat to climb the path leading upward, and the path downward was but a hairsbreadth broader. I could stir neither way. Far below, rushing and foaming, was the river. Cumbered by my rifle, and not daring to move one way or the other, I calmly debated on my position. After a while I gently seated myself and carefully took off my

boots. This being done, I tried to descend in this manner. Succeeding in a few steps, I was emboldened to try again, when a false step set me sliding down the steep, glass-like rock. I now thought I was doomed, for the abrupt termination of the hill hung directly over the river. When but a few yards from the rough, uneven edge overhanging the seething waters, I noticed a little to my right what appeared to be a crag-pit, into which could I but drop the butt-end of my rifle I should be saved. One tremendous effort, and not only my rifle, but I myself, was precipitated headlong into the cave. A few bruises were the only results of my fall.

But the next question was, How can I get out? After groping in the darkness for a few minutes, I saw ahead what appeared to be an opening. Hastily making my way to this beacon-light, I found, as I had surmised, the mouth of the cave. A few yards brought me to the river's brink. Here one more difficulty presented itself—I was on the wrong side of the

water. No bridge spanned the river; so I of necessity was compelled to walk back four miles to the nearest village, where I might cross and return, rather disconcerted at having lost my well-earned spoil, and certainly not a presentable figure until my lower garments were changed. The ride, or rather the slide, down the mountain side had carried away a large portion of my unmentionables; my helmet I had irretrievably lost sight of, and one boot was in a most dilapidated state. A few peasants near the village seemed struck with astonishment at seeing *my* pitiable plight; one or two women in the village exhibited great curiosity, and followed some distance with lingering looks of either pity or amusement, although I hurried past at a pace quite equal to Weston's.

CHAPTER XII.

Lost. — Turcomans. — Russian Atrocities. — Left-hand Friendship.—Premier Lord.—'Sons of Burnt Fathers.' —Marvellous.—Tiger Hunt.—At Bay.—'Non est.'— 'Shadow of God.'—Satisfied Grunt.—Wretched Road. —Teheran.—115° Fahrenheit.—Phenomena.—Distress. —Turkey.—Sick Man.—National Reforms.—Millennium.

ON leaving Ask, our muleteers, to save time and trouble, instead of proceeding by the caravan road, led their camels and mules over the plain of Demavend, and, as we afterwards learnt, were totally unacquainted with the road. Our journey should have lasted but seven or eight hours, but, as night approached, it became painfully evident that our guides were at a loss which direction to lead their animals.

We had for the last four hours been traversing a wild, desolate region, trackless and solitary. As darkness had now succeeded the sunlight, a brief consultation was held, and, after a few meaningless excuses, our camel-driver confessed that he had unfortunately lost his way, and would advise us to make a temporary encampment until daylight should reveal unto his blindness, as he termed it, the proper road.

We were somewhat suspicious as to our guide's good intentions. It was possible that he had purposely lost the way, after agreeing with the Turcomans as to the plunder; and, although we were compelled to assent, yet we determined to sleep cat-like, with one eye open and our rifles ready for any emergency. Had our suspicions proved correct, the camel-driver would assuredly have met with his deserts.

It was now too late to erect our tents, so that we were reluctantly roofless. A few stones were cleared away, our horses tethered, and a huge fire lighted, to guard against any

attack from prowling wolves. Our bedding was placed on the ground, and, weary and hungry, we retired supperless to bed. Fortunately, we had brought a good supply of warm clothing, and never did we feel more the need of our ulsters and blankets than on this cheerless plain. The night was intensely cold. We were at a great altitude, not more than two miles from perpetual snow. Our situation was anything but an enviable one. The continual howlings of jackals, infuriated by hunger and cold, made our sleep but of short duration. Day at last dawned without further alarm, and we recommenced our journey to the Lar.

Shortly after our departure, we came across a tribe of Turcomans, who were bound for Khiva. We bought a good supply of goats' milk, dates and cheese from these lawless nomads, and continued our march in their company. The chief was a native of Bokhara, but he said the Russians were there, and wanted too much 'baksheesh,' so they left that

part of Turkestan for one where the cursed Ooroos had not yet penetrated. His language was bitter against the tyrannical aggression of Russia, who, he said, burnt all before them. He expressed a great desire to have the Russian commander's beard in his hand, and, by the ferocious expression of his swarthy coun tenance, and the menacing grip on his scimitar, I thought that, could the desire be effected, General Kaufmann would be in rather dangerous quarters. He spoke of women and children, old and feeble men, being bayoneted by the fierce Russian soldiers at the command of their officer, because a stipulated sum could not be paid by the wretched people whom they massacred.

'If,' said he, 'if Russians are Christians, what are you ?'

The question was more than I could answer; but I immediately replied that Russia did not believe in our religion, but worshipped images and saints. He asked why Russia sent

her armies to Turkestan, ravaging and destroying the poor Turcoman's land? He had heard, he said, in the bazaars at Khiva, that England and Russia would fight in Turkestan; that Russia wanted to occupy India, as she had done Khivan territory, and asked if we could fight them? To this I replied, that England wished for peace, but, if Russia assailed our rights in India, we should unquestionably drive her back to the Oxus. 'Russia,' he remarked, 'is like a fox, deceitful and crafty.'

The road afforded us great interest in the beautiful scenery surrounding us. Encircled by the everlasting whiteness of the many peaks; the wide, quickly-flowing river at our feet, abounding with trout; the numerous nomadic tribes who had temporarily settled on the rich pastures of the Lar; and also the sport which we managed to make with the herds of deer and flocks of wild geese. We had now arrived at the eastern extremity of the valley, and after bidding 'God be with you!' to the

friendly Turcoman, who good-naturedly extended his left hand, ignorant that we used only the right, but wishing to appear polite, we selected for our encampment a beautiful spot, at the base of the last chain of hills leading northwards. Demavend formed a magnificent background to our exquisite landscape. Our four large tents looked formidable to any band of rovers who might have a passing fancy to visit us.

Not far distant was encamped the El Beggie or Premier Lord of Persia, who owned the country and villages around. The second day after our arrival, we received a visit from this sorrow-stricken old man, who had been dismissed for ever from the presence of the King of Kings, for some uncommitted, yet ably-devised, offence. On several succeeding occasions we received and returned these pleasing visits. Many an hour was spent in conversation with the El Beggie and his sons, which were greatly amusing, without being weari-

some, as is usually the case when in Persian society. Many and varied were the subjects spoken on from time to time. His youthful exploits—he was then at the advanced age of eighty-seven—were recounted to us; how, at one time, he had alone encountered a fierce tiger in the jungles of Ghelan and come off victor, with but a few marks on his body; and, when fighting against the Turcomans, how he had, with his own hand, cut down the dogs of unbelievers.

One day, in course of a conversation on European topics, the old Lord asked if we had not once fought by the side of the Osmanli (Turks) against Russia? On being answered in the affirmative, he said, 'Could you beat Russia alone?' We informed him that our interests were centred in peace; but, if compelled to fight Russia, we could never doubt the result. 'Ah,' says he, 'those "sons of burnt fathers" will be the ruin of Persia.'

Many were the questions he asked about

London, that 'marvellous place,' as it pleased the old man to call it, and our Indian Empire. Were we sure that those 'sons of dogs,' the Ooroos, could not take Hindustan? 'Thank God!' was the fervent ejaculation, as we readily answered, 'Quite sure.' Was it true that a woman ruled England? was the next question. On our assuring him that such was the fact, but that our Government was not despotic, but ruled by representatives chosen by the nation, he exclaimed, 'Marvellous!'

The conversation once turned on railways and steam engines, but on this subject the aged nobleman appeared to be invulnerable. He had placed a mark to believe so far, and no farther. He thought it impossible for a railway train to travel fifty miles an hour, or that we could speak from Teheran with distant London in a minute. These appeared to the old man mere delusions of a fanciful imagination. Our army and navy all underwent careful questioning, until at last our

visitors rose to leave, apparently mazed by what they had heard.

Some time after our arrival, we were told that a number of tigers were annually killed in the district by the peasants; and one morning a servant of the El Beggie came to our tent, and, with an awestricken countenance, said that during the night several sheep had been killed by what was thought to be tigers. No further notice was taken of the affair at the time, but we determined to organise a party to hunt this terrible ravager. The afternoon of the same day found my friend and myself at the summit of a neighbouring hill, accompanied only by two servants, and unarmed, except by a Colt's heavy revolver which I carried, and a fowling-piece which one of the men had. The servants were some twenty yards ahead, and appeared to be conversing on some interesting subject, when suddenly an exclamation of terror and consternation was uttered by one of them, who hurried back toward us, and,

with an affrighted look, tremblingly pointed to a small bush about thirty yards away. He was unable to utter more than the one word, 'poolang' (tiger). For a moment I laughed at the man's story; but the tremulous lips and the pallid face bespoke more than he said. A savage tiger strikes one with a feeling of awe, even in a menagerie at home; but a ferocious beast in the open wood, unarmed as we were, is a much more formidable foe, and the better part of valour at this time was discretion. We despatched a man to our tents for two rifles. Unfortunately, however, a number of cartridges had been lost the previous day, and what remained were charged with shot only. With such weapons it would have been worse than madness to attempt the dislodgment of our foe. I climbed up towards the place where our servants had stood, but no signs of such majestic presence was visible. The bush was clear, and I was about to freely indulge in contemptuous language to the awe-stricken

servants, when a slight sound on my right caused me to turn hastily about. Not half a dozen yards from me I saw, in a crouching posture, with head erect, an immense tigress, who, with outstretched forepaws, lay jealously guarding two cubs. I was in a very unenviable dilemma. Two yards in the opposite direction was a yawning precipice, and, before me, the most ferocious animal man has ever met. Had the tigress sprung upon me, and in the great excitement of the moment I had missed my aim, death was inevitable, either from being dashed to pieces on the projecting rocks hundreds of feet below, or from the capacious jaws or still more terrible claws of the infuriated animal. Once, for a moment, I thought the struggle was coming. The tigress raised her head, and in a menacing manner shook her tail, and with flashing eyes, which shone like balls of fire, appeared as if about to rise. I grasped my revolver, determined, if it was to be, to die hard. Fortunately, with presence

of mind for the occasion, I had scanned the ground, and had intended, should she spring, to quickly step on one side, firing at angles. The animal, flying beyond her intended mark, would possibly have found her death far below. The suspense to me was dreadful. A lifetime was almost passed in those brief moments. At last, seeing no further movement from her highness, I, with revolver cocked, cautiously descended, and in a few moments rejoined my anxious friend, who dared not interfere with his duck-shot. As it was now dusk, we decided on returning to camp to load our rifles with ball cartridge, and re-enter on our adventure the following morning. We had sustained an inglorious defeat, and were anxious to wipe out the stain.

Ere daybreak we were making preparations for the encounter. The two sons of the El Beggie, and four or five servants, with ourselves, formed this attacking party, and upon nearing the bush we formed companies to sur-

round, if possible, the victorious occupant of the brushwood. After carefully loading our rifles, myself and a servant proceeded as noiselessly as possible towards the spot of the previous day's adventure, but by a different route, so that we should not be so fully exposed to any onslaught. After reaching an eminence exactly opposite the dread spot, we were surprised to find the animal was *non est.* We searched far and near, but nowhere could we find even a trace of the tigress. The Persians, by their exchanged looks and smiles, were apparently disinclined to believe in the veracity of our statement; but such dubiousness was of course never spoken. After carefully scrutinising every possible crevice or bush, we, rather crestfallen, returned to our tents.

The same evening six goats were carried away by these ravenous beasts, but we never again mentioned tiger-hunting to our lordly neighbours.

The river, flowing twenty yards from our

tents, abounded in trout and perch, affording us great amusement and sport during our stay. One day his Serene Majesty the King of Kings, with his numerous train, passed us *en route* for the hunting grounds of Mazanderan. It is, perhaps, an uncommon sight to witness the entire retinue of an Eastern monarch, with all its pomp and grandeur, journey towards some provincial hunting-seat. The first apprisement of the event which we received was a body of some two hundred ragged spearmen, who were preparing the way for the Shadow of the Universe and his loads of wives. The tents and provision camels next passed. The chief coffee-bearer and the pipe-bearer were next in procession. Half an hour elapsed, when clouds of dust announced a somewhat formidable arrival. Twenty-two carriage-loads of the king's ladies were the cause of this display of antiquated vehicles. Of course the royal ladies were invisible. A host of guards and attendants blocked up either side. These

were followed by the ministers and nobles in attendance—servants, cup-bearers, barbers, and other camp-followers. Another pause, and then, in the distance, with pennants and banners flying, surrounded by his own tribe of Kajar Arabs, dressed in the fashion of the exhibitors of 'Punch and Judy' shows, came mounted on a noble white Turcoman richly caparisoned, his Imperial and august Majesty the Shah-in-Shah of Persia. On reaching our tents, he inquired whose encampment it was, and on receiving a reply to the effect that two Englishmen were the inmates, he gave a grunt of satisfaction and passed on.

The weather had proved most propitious for our enjoyment. Several times, however, we were visited by severe thunderstorms. At such times Demavend was seen in its grandest form. The vivid flashes of lightning lingeringly played around its snowy crest, lent an awful yet majestic appearance to the natural wildness of the surrounding scenery.

Early in August we struck our tents, presented our salaams to the El Beggie, wishing that his star might ever be in the ascendancy, and bid farewell to the finest district in the land of the Persians. Leaving the Lar, I left the caravan and travelled alone by a nearer route towards the capital. The road was more than I had bargained for, rugged and mountainous the entire distance. I was mounted on a small bay Arab, one I had purchased in Teheran, a superb little animal, almost unequalled in swiftness. He cheerfully did the distance, about fifty-five miles, in less than nine hours, over a wretched road, comparable only with the one between Shiraz and Bushire, which is described by authentic travellers as the worst road in the world. Half the distance I had no alternative but to dismount and lead my willing little Arab. We reached the gates of Teheran about an hour after sunset.

The heat in Teheran was terrible, especially

after the cool atmosphere of Mazanderan. It was reported that cholera had made its appearance in the military camp outside the city walls; this was, however, afterwards proved to be untrue.

The day of my arrival in the capital was the first of the month of fasting, called Ramazan, which is universally recognised by all followers of the doctrines of Mahomed. The poorer classes during this month of fasting suffer severely, especially when Ramazan falls during the summer months. All good Mussulmans from dawn to sunset piously refrain from eating, drinking, and smoking (the latter of the three abstentions is by far the greater sacrifice). Not a drop of water may be taken to quench their thirst or to moisten the swollen and parched lips, not a morsel of food to appease the inward cravings, nor a whiff of smoke to revive the exhausted energies may be indulged in.

As a rule, the poorer classes of Mahomed's

disciples more conscientiously respect the thirty days' fast than do the wealthier Mahomedans. As the shades of evening draw nigh great preparations are made for a sumptuous meal. The anxious party of faithful fast-keepers look with some concern towards the sinking orb of day, and as soon as they lose sight of the last ray of the departing luminary they 'fall to' with a will, determined, by all appearances, to quickly make up for lost time.

In towns the firing of a cannon announces to the expectant half-famished crowds that the time for gratifying the inner man has arrived. A few minutes previous to the gun being fired all is got in readiness for the meal. The kalyun is prepared, tobacco damped, and charcoal ignited. The rice and curry is vigorously stirred, sometimes to an extent very suggestive of impatience, which should not be, considering the ordinance is of such divine origin.

The moment the distant boom is heard, and long ere the returning echoes reach them, the

kalyun is gurgling, thick wreaths of rose-scented smoke are curling heavenward, solid grunts of satisfaction are heard, a very hasty 'bismillah' spoken, and all mouths are busy. The meal has commenced. No time for compliments is this. It is everyone for himself. The mournful look hitherto seen is chased away by the smiles of determination to do their duty, and cheerfulness reigns on each swarthy countenance.

The upper classes, however, do not so scrupulously observe these fasts and ceremonies. Civilised society and European habits bring religious ordinances and Mahomed's injunctions subordinate to personal convenience. No one would of course dare to eat or drink during the day in the presence of orthodox Mussulmen, but were he in the seclusion of his own harem, or invited to the house of a Christian, the most exalted follower of Mahomed's doctrines is not unwillingly constrained to accept the pangs of hunger as more absolute

and substantially prior (to their own personal ideas) than all the requirements of the Koran.

The hot summer dragged wearily on, until we saw with gladness the first autumnal shower. The wet seasons in Persia are of but short duration; the rain falls in torrents for two or three days, without intermission, and then as suddenly cease as it commenced. There is no timely warning as to the approach of these downfalls. A clear blue sky overhead, which has been without spot or cloud for six months, a small black speck in the distant horizon, and, before any preparation can be made, the rain patters in large drops on the earth—almost all could be included in a few minutes. Thunderstorms, accompanied by vivid flashes of lightning, frequently pass over Teheran, but without rain; the atmosphere at such times is charged with sulphurous fumes, and this, combined with the excessive heat, renders breathing almost a burden. The heat in Teheran frequently reaches 115° Fahrenheit

in the coolest room. Bushire and Southern Persia reach even a higher degree; but the cooler breeze from the sea greatly mitigates the extreme heat of the Gulf: in Bushire and neighbourhood the air is impregnated with moisture, whilst in Teheran a dry, arid atmosphere perpetuates the summer months; it is supposed to be the most unhealthy place in Persia.

The winter commenced early, and lasted an unusual length. Not many of the inhabitants could recollect one equal in its prolonged severity. Towards Christmas, the roads leading to the capital were entirely blocked by snow, which had fallen heavily for upwards of a fortnight. Quite a phenomena was seen in Teheran—hoar frost silvered the mulberry trees which line each side of the 'Boulevard des Européans.' This was each morning seen by the astonished natives, who could not understand its strange and continued appearance.

The extraordinary severity of the winter had a disastrous effect on the line of telegraph;

each morning's test revealed fresh faults. In one section numerous iron poles were snapped at their base as though they had been timber; the wires were contracted by the sharp frosts, and snapped in hundreds of places. Once or twice the lines and poles were completely embedded in the snow. Christmas Day was spent by many out in the biting cold repairing the ever-occurring breaks. Many cases of starvation among the ryots (peasants) were reported, especially in Western Persia. Hamadan (the ancient Ecbatana) suffered greatly by the severities. Indeed, throughout the country the terrors of winter were fearfully evident.

At Hamadan is the tomb of Esther and Mordecai. It is a place of great pilgrimage with the Jews; it is now chiefly famous for its leather and copper. Rumours were current about this time of the king's intended second tour to Europe, and speculations were rife as to the result of the Russo-Turkish war: whether a Congress would meet, or if Russia

would openly defy England to action. But amid all the vague rumours and startling facts which were ever crowding on us, not one word was uttered in the city as to the policy and attitude of Persia should England and Russia clash. It was at one time thought that an occupation of Baghdad by Persian troops was decided upon. One thing was certain: a large force was concentrated near the Turco-Persian frontier, and orders were daily expected for an advance.

England's attitude, however, apparently saved Turkey in that quarter, or we should be hearing of another claimant in the division of the Sick Man.

We are rather inclined to think, however, that if Turkey can in justice be called the Sick Man, through her apparent disinclination to carry out the accepted reforms which we hear so much talk of, most certain it is that Persia needs medical assistance. On the one hand, Turkey accepted and agreed to certain national

reforms which individual prejudice must certainly be violently opposed to; whilst, on the other hand, Persia either will not or dare not accept the reforms which have been proposed for her benefit. When Turkey falls, through corrupt administration, rottenness of her external policy, or dies a natural death from old age and total debility, Persia may groan in spirit, for her days will be numbered.

The conjoined reforms of the two nations may be a great theme for Parliamentary debate or party faction—may possibly cause war and revolutions—but the event of their effectual fulfilment is in the far distant future—possible, perhaps, when the two countries are ruled by different Powers, certainly not under the present system of autocratic government, backed up and supported by a fanatical, yet all-powerful priesthood, who will never consent to even a modification of reform. The words 'Turkish reforms' are, in our opinion, mythical; they point to something that can

never be. When the Sick Man, propped up as he is, has gained sufficient strength to reform the wretched existing form of government, the strength may possibly be used in a contrary direction. Should such a consummation be accomplished as reform in Stamboul, we may with a degree of expectancy look forward to that blessed period, the Millennium.

CHAPTER XIII.

European Rumours.—Passport.—*Bon Voyage.*—Persian Promises.—Golden Globe.—Amusing Pastime.—Departure from Teheran.—Homeward Bound.—Animal Stupidity.—Morning Meal.—Casvin.—Religious Fervour.—Imaginary Obstacles.—Salaam Aleikum.—Persian Falsity.—Menjeel.—Surfeit Rood.—Alone in a Forest.—'Kurak Kurak.'—Stiffened by Cold.—Kudoom.

IN March, 1878, my term of engagement expired, and I prepared to start for England. The world at this juncture was in a state of anxious excitement at the constant cries of 'War imminent,' 'Reserves called out,' 'Six millions voted for war preparations,' etc., and a journey through the dominions of the White Czar was not a thing contemplated upon by many who bore the name of Russia's great

enemy. On all sides of Persia quarantine was established. The Circassian frontier, the Caspian Sea, the Turco-Persian frontier, were equally difficult to pass, and for some time the belief was universal that the Bushire and Suez route would be the only available one for homeward-bound travellers.

April came, and still no decision in Europe. No abatement of the cry that war was imminent. Fourteen days' quarantine were enforced on all passengers by the Caspian steamers. This was established by the Russian military authorities at St. Petersburg with a view, it was officially announced, to prevent the plague (which never existed) from being carried into their territory. Had the explanation been an honest one, we should doubtless have heard that it was to prevent communication by courier with England.

At last, after waiting impatiently to the end of April, and as summer was fast approaching, I determined to start *viâ* the Caspian Sea, and

risk the consequences. I obtained the necessary passport from her Majesty's Minister, and a warning that I had better use discretion in my anticipated journey through Russia, and to travel in all haste to the German frontier. But for the past six months we had heard only conflicting statements as to British interests and their definition; I thought it quite possible that the sequel would be talk, and that British interests would be left to take care of themselves, and, tired of waiting for a settlement, I walked down to the Persian Foreign Office for permission to leave the capital chapar for Resht. This permission and requisition for post-horses must be obtained by all who leave the metropolis of Persia.

As I entered, the ante-room was full of servants, slave-like in their manners, who in a minute or two ushered me into the presence of Hajee Ali Khan, the Foreign Minister, who, on hearing my request for permission to leave, at once ordered the necessary instructions to be

sent to the interested officials. After a short conversation on European topics, he bade me *bon voyage*, and I returned. The Minister's servants mistook me for a British Legation *attaché*, and in numerous meaningless salaams bowed me to the door.

The whole etiquette and courtesy in Persia is composed of hollowness and falsity. Highly flavoured and richly coloured compliments are always ready in a Persian; they are uttered without the slightest intent to convey their literal meaning. Promises are thus given with no intention of ever thinking about their fulfilment. A Persian would one moment be swearing that 'he was your sacrifice,' and that 'his highest ambition in life was to gaze at the light of your eyes.' The next moment, when out of sight, he would be fiendishly meditating upon the varieties of torture which he would amuse himself with if he could but have his own way for a short time. On entering the Shah's palace, servant or courtier, he

must prostrate himself before the great king, and in this absurd position must he remain until the harsh voice of the great Shadow of the Universe is heard commanding him to speak. With much fear and trembling, and with timorous voice, the king is addressed in the following manner: 'May I ever be your majesty's sacrifice. Allow me, a dog, to address myself to the great nobility, even the Shadow of Allah.' Chief priests are treated with the same marked reverence, the people standing aside until the wolf in sheep's clothing has passed by.

The king's palace at Teheran is not richly adorned, as one is led to believe such courts are by the fairy tales in the 'Arabian Nights.' One or two rooms are fitted up in European fashion, by costly, probably unpaid-for, furniture from England. A few pictures of modern painters ornament the walls. In one room is a splendid autograph picture of her Majesty the Queen; on the opposite side is a similar one

of Francis Joseph of Austria. The finest piece of work which is to be seen in the king's apartments is the golden globe which was made previous to the European tour, to keep safe the jewels of his majesty.

A large globe of the world, in pure gold, richly illuminated by precious stones. The British Isles flash and sparkle in diamonds of the first water, whilst our immediate neighbour, France, shines out in brilliancy of emeralds. Germany is represented by turquoise stones, and Russia is marked out by rubies. The whole continent of Africa, undivided, is a mass of emeralds. India is adorned and richly clad in pure whiteness of pearls. America is found sparkling in spar amethysts. Other nations are represented by rich gems and precious stones. The king's dresses, swords, daggers, etc., are each adorned by these somewhat expensive trimmings. One palace there is in Teheran, built and once occupied by Fath Ali Shah (the present Shah's illustrious

PUTTING ON THE VEIL.

great grandsire), which is remarkable in its structure. It is said that the king was passionately enamoured by the fair sex, so much so that his chief amusement was in frolicsomely passing his time with his selected favourites. For this purpose he caused a marble slab to be erected from an upper window of the harem to a tank of bubbling rose-water in the garden below, a distance of about twenty feet. At the base of this oblique was a bower of passion flowers, in which the amorous monarch would recline whilst the ladies of his harem would descend the slanting slab in a state of perfect nudity, and were caught at the bottom by Fath Ali Shah, who then threw his lovely burdens into the sweet-scented water.

After receiving my passport, the only thing required now was to obtain a *visa* from the Russian Ambassador. This being done, I was in readiness to start for distant England. On the morning of the fourth of May, horses were brought, and, after adieus were spoken, we

mounted our post animals and threaded our way through the bazaars leading towards the Casvin Gate. On emerging from the narrow thoroughfares and approaching the city walls, the ordinary custom of selling at the gates was going on.

All kinds of articles are here exposed for sale, as in ancient days, when the Prophet announced that on the morrow such and such a thing would be sold at the city gates. Muleteers, camel drivers, dervishes, beggars, and religious mendicants stood in confused groups at the gate, trying in harsh tones to run down the sellers of fruit, etc., who were seated on the ground.

Donkey-drivers were buying bread to sell in the villages outside the town. Muleteers were hoarding up a few thin loaves which must last for days; these, with a few melons, would constitute their unvarying meals. I had a *compagnon de voyage*, an Austrian gentleman who had been in the Persian service two or

three years, but who was leaving, thoroughly disgusted with the mode of payment of salaries. Some half-dozen miles from the city walls we halted to take farewell of those friends who had accompanied us so far on our homeward journey, and to take a last look at the capital of his Imperial Majesty the Shah in Shah.

A few words and hearty shakes of the hand, and our horses were galloping northwards towards the Caspian Sea. A stiff ride soon placed one stage between our late residence and ourselves. On arriving at the post-house, we were joined by a Persian khan travelling to Tiflis. Fresh horses being brought, we were quickly cantering from Myun-Jub.

We had not proceeded more than a mile, when our new acquaintance suddenly came to grief. The animal he bestrode had previously given evident symptoms of its unwillingness to proceed; but, waiting its opportunity until we had reached the middle of a stream, it sud-

denly endeavoured to stand erect on its hind legs, and in as quick a movement its fore feet were down, as also was the khan. A slight soaking was all the result of the mishap, but the animal persistently refused to move. After many unsuccessful attempts to proceed at even a walk, I changed animals with the unfortunate Iranee. Seeing the cause of our delay was only stupidity—the horse appeared to be sound and of good make—I tightened my girths and mounted. But the animal still evinced his desire to do battle with the air; I thought of another way to coax the brute. One or two quick applications of the spur, a sharp cut from my whip, and, by the speed we travelled, the Derby winning-post might have been ahead. The horse travelled in splendid condition the remaining twenty miles.

At a caravanserai midway between the stages we overtook and passed a party of Europeans travelling by caravan stages to Resht. Some were bound to Germany, and

others to France. We reached Abdulabad, the second stage, at a little after midday; and, after two hours' rest, we again mounted, and rode on, through uninteresting, undulating land, void of cultivation or vegetation, surrounded by the customary hills.

The third stage was Shazpore, and, as the sun was fast receding into obscurity, we deemed it advisable to rest here, and saddle-up early the following morning.

We had put seventy miles between the ruins of Media's capital and ourselves. We were invited by the khan to dine with him in the village, and, in credit to his cook, I must say the fowl cutlets and his soups were excellent. After dinner we spent some time in lively conversation and with the soothing kalyun (the khan spoke good French). When time began to move slowly on, we asked permission to retire, and mounted the huge steps of the chapar khaneh, and soon found quietude in the peaceful arms of Morpheus.

The khan was the first astir in the morning, and had proved a thoughtful companion. A boiling samovar was quickly brought in our room, accompanied by a good-sized tray of fruits, some bread, and eggs. The air was keen; the sun was but just rising as we commenced our repast, which we did ample justice to. The kalyun was smoked around, and we each felt ready for our journey. Fortunately, no mishap befel our party, and while the day was yet young, we saw, not far ahead, the bare mud walls of the halfway-house to Casvin. It was Sunday morning, and, as we passed through the well-cultivated gardens and fields leading to the town, I could almost imagine the village bells tolling the hour of worship.

All nature seemed dressed in its own attire; the air was pleasantly cool; the sweet fragrance of wild flowers and orange-blossom impregnated the atmosphere with odoriferous perfumes. Rich golden-hued cornfields swayed

to and fro in the morning breeze; tall stalks of maize were bursting with grain; vineyards and orange-groves, all bringing forth their fruits in abundance, marked our route.

Our ride was a most pleasant one. Indeed, we fain would have stood gazing on the beauties of nature, and enjoying the cooling breeze, but our steamer was timed to leave in about thirty-six hours, and we were still almost two hundred miles from the port, so that these delights must be left behind, and we must face the crumbling mud ruins of Casvin, the Kasvin of Byron. It was once a town of considerable importance, but years of decay and terrors of famine, civil contentions, and petty feuds, have brought down the high walls and crumbled the palaces of Byron's famous scene.

Casvin suffered greatly during the recent famine; the poorer classes died by thousands, and the desolation was spoken of as fearful in its widespread intensity. The grapes of Casvin are exceedingly luscious; pomegranates, also,

are famed for their sweetness. The religious fervour of Casvin is more fanatical than most towns of Persia; the solemn, monotonous tone of the moollahs and dervishes is heard in almost every street, or rather lane, of the town. The people appeared the most miserable of their kind I have yet seen, existing in filth and rags, dragged through life without the slightest comfort or even necessary indulgence, which we of the West reckon amongst our daily requirements. The houses are in a state of ruinous decay; long rows of dust-heaps lined our path towards the chapar-khaneh. Even the mosque is in a very dilapidated condition, and, as usual, it concerns no one. At the present rate, Casvin will, at an early day, be a mere heap of ruins and a thing of the past.

The keeper of the post-house had an apparent objection to our proceeding. Several reasons were urged as to the impossibility of our resuming the journey that day. The old

man was perhaps anxious to earn, or rather beg, a couple of krans in return for his hospitality. After a little delay, however, horses were procured and saddled, and we were once more *en route.* Here we parted company with the khan, whose road was due west. We expressed our sorrow at having so quickly to part with our pleasant fellow-traveller; and with a hearty '*Bon voyage, messieurs,*' we parted.

The bazaars of Casvin are the worst of the kind in Persia. The filth and rubbish of years is thrown up in all available corners. The fumes from such pungent heaps were not of the sweetest. The suburbs of Casvin are of a more interesting character. For a considerable distance orchards and vineyards line the route. Half the stage to Mazra is through cultivated land.

This village was reached about sunset, and is one of the most miserable collection of mud-huts it has been my lot to see. Near to the closely-thrown-up fever-breeding village were a

tribe of Bedouins. We received an invitation from the chief to accept the hospitality of his tent. After dismounting at the chapar khaneh we walked over to the Arab encampment, and received the 'Salaam aleikum,' which appeared to be well-meant, and I responded in a friendly manner, 'Aleikum salaam,' (peace be between us).

I had met this tribe before south of the capital; the witty, facetious conversation of the chief and the laughing faces of his attendants made us feel quite at home. A kalyun was brought and passed round, and as the evening advanced dates, milk and fruit were brought in.

We had given instructions to our servant to purchase from the tribe a lamb, which presently appeared, after having undergone the process of cooking. The Arabs present apparently were not familiar with the sight of a roasted lamb and boiled rice, and, stroking their beards, exclaimed, 'Mashallah, Mashallah!'—'Praise

God, praise God!' We took up our positions at either side of the chief, and after hearing his 'Bismillah!'—'In the name of God!'—we commenced our meal.

The long knives of these sons of Ishmael were quickly drawn, and in a moment each one had a steaming piece of flesh in his hand. Their dark, greasy-looking arms were at times buried in the huge heaps of rice, which had been abundantly served. For our own part, sour milk and dates, with a few eggs, served, although each Arab in turn offered us a dainty piece, which he had managed to cut. On our politely saying 'Bismillah!' the capacious jaws were opened, and the morsel disappeared. Their rapturous expressions of delight evidenced their enjoyment of the meal.

After the repast was completed wild Arabian ditties were sung to entertain us, pipes were occasionally brought, and until a late hour we remained in the tent of the hospitable Arab.

The sun had been casting its brightness around for some time ere we mounted and left Mazra for Porchenar, a journey of three hours over a rough, mountainous road. At Porchenar we hastily swallowed a few uncooked eggs, a few dates, and proceeded on to Menjil. Through interesting country, between stages, we came upon an extensive encampment of Turcomans, from whom we purchased a few dates, some cheese, and half-baked bread.

At Menjil we were informed that no horses could be had until evening, the post-house keeper solemnly assuring us that the animals were all out. I questioned my servant whether any chapar had passed us since morning. He replied that he thought not, and that the chaparchee only wanted extra hire. This confirmed our suspicions, and we walked over to the rudely-erected stables in front of the post-house, where we found seven fresh horses.

These the man protested were his brother's, and he could not allow them to be taken.

'But perhaps if your excellencies,' said one man, 'paid him a little extra, he would consent.'

Here was the secret. The man, after all his endeavours to cheat and delay us, received some extra payment from a stout whip I carried. This remonstrance had the effect desired; in five minutes the horses were saddled, and we turned in the direction of Rustumabad.

From Menjil to Resht is the finest scenery throughout Persia, the entire distance—ninety miles—being through a forest of olive and wild pomegranate trees, running by the side of the largest river in Iran, called the Surfeit Rood. The path now and then carried us over ridges and heights of the Elburz chain. At times entire confidence must be placed in the horse, owing to the extreme narrowness of the path, not more than four feet wide; on one side a yawning precipice and a deep, quickly flowing river, on the other hand a

gigantic barricade of basaltic rocks. At times a feeling of uneasiness would involuntarily creep over one, and more than once I fain would have dismounted and trusted to my own means of locomotion; but to pull up on the narrow causeway might have been more dangerous than to proceed.

From Rustumabad to Kudoom the scenery is exquisite; the lofty mountains in the background, the mighty river beneath, whilst all around is an endless forest of green in a variety of shades, folded together in a circle of green-clad hills, majestically and wonderfully interwoven by Nature's wise handiwork.

We left the village of Rustumabad about four p.m., intending to reach Kudoom about two hours after sunset, but another disappointment crushed those hopes. Some half dozen miles from our last stage we halted for a few minutes to partake of refreshments, which consisted of dried bread, dates, cold fowl, and water from the Surfeit Rood. Our repast, not

being a ceremonious one, was consequently soon over, and we tightened girths and passed on our way.

The animal I rode appeared to be suffering from sore fetlocks, and from this reason was rather tardy in his progress, allowing the other horses to outstride him, and thus considerably gain on us. In a short time I found myself alone, moving on at a miserable pace through the intricacies of a Ghelan forest. At one part of the road these intricate paths became more perplexing, and in ignorance I unfortunately took the wrong one. I noticed at the time that my jaded, suffering animal had an indubitable disinclination to turn, but mistaking its source, I pressed forward.

For some time I rode on, wondering that I heard no sound, when a sudden thought caused me to look at the road, which was somewhat muddy through recent heavy rains. I noticed that no hoof-prints were to be seen. I immediately pulled up and shouted, but the only

response was the echo of my own voice. As we were still some distance from Kudoom when I last saw my fellow-travellers and the guide, I concluded the wisest plan would be to retrace my wandering steps; but even this was not so easy of accomplishment as I had imagined; the prints made by the horse were almost covered.

It was by this time nearing sunset, and the thought of spending a night alone in the wild jungles of Ghelan without food or even a rug was something I had no particular desire to experience. The wild cries of the hyena and the howlings of wolves were even now ringing in my ears. Once an affrighted jackal crossed my path; my hand unconsciously fell on my revolver. I was in a puzzling dilemma as to what course I had better adopt, when suddenly I thought of the horse, and that through it I might possibly reach Rustumabad —our starting-point.

I dismounted, and allowed the animal to

pursue its own path, which it evinced great willingness to do. In about half an hour we reached the small hut which had been the scene of our frugal meal. I examined the ground around, and found the only footprints were of animals travelling towards Kudoom. This satisfied me that no one had passed that place in search of me, so I resolved to remain here until the guide or my servant returned. I had just seated myself on a stone, disconsolately viewing my situation, thinking how I might possibly remain here for some hours to come, when my horse assumed a listening attitude. In a few moments I heard faintly nearing, the voice of my servant calling, 'Sahib, Sahib, woy, woy!'—'Master, alas, alas!' I shouted at the top of my voice, and in a few minutes had rejoined my friends, who had been greatly alarmed at my absence.

Kudoom was once more in prospect, where we arrived, tired and hungry, about midnight. A more miserable ride than the one just

mentioned I cannot imagine; the road appeared to have no end. Mountain torrents impeded our way, low-hanging boughs painfully reminded us of the profound darkness, and despite the repeated warnings of our guide, as he cried, 'Kurak, kurak!'—'Take care! take care!'—we frequently came in rough contact with stout olive-branches, which proved more than a match for our already well-blistered faces. The only objects of interest were the innumerable groups of luminous silkworms which formed at times a pathway of magnificent brilliancy through this never-ending forest.

Our guide must have become weary of my oft-repeated inquiries as to our proximity to the post-house. After answering these questions in full detail for upwards of an hour, he at last contented himself by saying, 'Nazdik, nazdik'—'Near, near.' Once a light faintly glimmering in the distance revived my hopes, and I jumped to the welcome conclusion that our journey was almost ended. On question-

ing the man he informed that the lights were from a Turcoman village four miles from Kudoom.

My spirits and my feelings, which had for some time been greatly taxed, refused to support this additional burthen, and found vent in accusing the man of purposely leading us wrong, and of falsely representing the distance.

To my mind the road must be very similar in many parts, or otherwise we passed one particular spot many times. In the daylight the journey is undoubtedly a pleasant one, full of absorbing interest to a lover of nature or to a sportsman: but half-starved, with a ravenous appetite and cramped limbs, and at dead of night, a ride of thirty-five miles through water-courses, ravines, and low-spreading trees, which show no respect to one's feelings, isn't the most agreeable thing in the world.

At last, half-perished of cold and hunger,

we arrived at the long-expected chapar khaneh, which was the last I saw in Persia. On asking for something with which to appease our inward cravings, the post-house keeper replied in no consoling manner that he had nothing to offer us. It was too late to commence cooking operations, so we accepted the only alternative, and went supperless to bed.

Our steamer was reported as leaving Resht at noon the following day, and twenty-three miles yet divided us and the *finis* of all our troubles. This necessitated short repose at Kudoom, so I spread my blanket on the wooden floor of the windowless room, inflated my air pillow, and without divesting myself of revolver, boots, or clothes, laid down to obtain what little rest I dare.

My limbs were almost immovable from the long cramping posture in the saddle, aided by the stiffness from the cold. Yet, being somewhat accustomed to such weariness, I heard nothing till my man called in the morning,

announcing the horses were ready. We had given orders to start before sunrise.

Hastily swallowing a cup of strongly-flavoured tea (or, perchance, something infinitely worse) we again mounted and took our way towards the only port Persia has on the Caspian.

I had gained some reputation amongst our Bedouin friends as a medicine man, having in a few hours effected a 'miraculous cure' by the application of a well-seasoned mustard-plaster to the neck of an Arab who was suffering from what he termed looseness in his head; the real ailment was a severe cold, which had fastened itself in the man's face. The mustard-plaster had not been doing duty many moments, when the Arab imagined himself near the place so terrifying to all good Mahomedans; these imaginations found vent in loud cries, much to the amusement of the spectators, who clapped their hands and highly enjoyed their companion's sufferings. The

man positively declared that I had lighted a fire on his back with a piece of wet cloth, but notwithstanding this, he decided to think himself cured, and, as firm faith goes much further than medicine, I suppose he was.

This reputation had reached Kudoom on faster wings than I bargained for; the result was that two or three of the gentler sex appeared at an early hour to speak with the hakim (doctor) sahib. They had heard of this fire-cloth, and wished me to give them one or two for their own use. Not having time to manufacture plasters, I gave to each a few pills, part flour and part quinine, which had been used with astonishing results before.

One case, I remember, having no quinine in my chest, I made a few pills of common flour and administered to an eager patient, who thanked me and returned in two hours declaring himself to be once more a perfect model of physical humanity.

CHAPTER XIV.

Glorious Sunrise.—Eden.—Resht.—Storehouses.—Pir-i-Bazaar.—Priestly Blessing.—Jolting.—Disappointment.—'Inglice neest oorus ast.'—Robinson Crusoe.—Inshallah!—The 'Alexandrovna.'—Sakutschky.—Baku.—Quarantine.—Russian Civility.—Disgusting Hovels.—'Torn Canvas.'—Disinfected Clothing.—Pitiable Plight.—Cleanliness.—Emancipation Day.—Again *en route*.

THROUGHOUT my travels in the land of the people whose laws suffereth no change or alteration, I cannot recall a more delightful ride than this my last journey on horseback in Persia. The morning had just dawned, the sun was rising in the eastern horizon, tinting with a golden hue the summits of the distant Elburz previous to its advent to the lower world. The sweet sing-

ing, in melodious harmony, of gaily-plumaged birds, and the delicious fragrance emitted from the wild honeysuckle, pomegranate, and olive-trees, which form a continuous avenue to Pir-i-Bazaar, would each tend to raise some words of enthusiastic eulogium from the traveller, especially after crossing the arid deserts so common in more southern districts.

To a new arrival in Persia, *viâ* the Caspian, the country must present to his fascinated gaze a veritable Eden. Bitter, however, must be the after-thought, when these natural beauties can only be thought of as things of the past, when the sandy plains, void of vegetation, and the suffocating atmosphere of Teheran is reached, and one looks in vain for a recurrence of those charming rides from Resht to Casvin.

For the first time in Persia I saw the common English nettle in lane side abundance; nowhere before had I seen a trace of it. We continued at a canter along this pleasant

country lane until, a short distance ahead, we saw the mosques and the red-tiled roofs of Resht. This port, although on the Shah's territory, is essentially Russian; nothing reminds one of Persian authority or supremacy except the squalid bazaars of the town and the long-robed Persian vendors. The buildings are structures much resembling Russian architecture. It is the only place in Persia where the roofs are tiled or are otherwise than flat. The town is a filthy mud-hole, generally fever-stricken.

We remained but an hour in Resht, feeling anxious to reach Pir-i-Bazaar. The sun was now high in the heavens, and the richness of the surrounding country was seen in its real beauty. Nowhere in Central Asia is there such fertility and richness of soil as in the much-coveted provinces of Ghelan and Mazanderan.

Russian statesmen would welcome the opportunity to issue the order for their an-

nexation. The time may possibly be drawing near when this prize would be worth more than gold could buy, and their schemes for seizure assume a more formidable shape. They are not held in sufficient estimation by the Persian Government. The land is allowed to remain in its primeval state; the only law regulating native action is that all game must be strictly preserved for the pleasure of His Imperial Majesty the Shah.

It is to be lamented that such men as Hussein Khan cannot or will not see the practicability of transforming this vast wilderness, abounding in riches, into a storehouse for times of scarcity. For more than a hundred miles does this fecundity of soil extend, and with some slight expense might prove not only a storehouse but a fruitful source from which the exhausted treasury of Persia might recruit and strengthen itself. But to effect this some exertion would be required, and to generate the seeds of exer-

tion a stimulative force is necessary, and in every direction I look in vain to find even a particle. Lassitude and general imbecility must be supplanted by national reform and good government, and the former are too indelibly fixed in Persia to hope for any amendment.

Avaricious eyes are anxiously fixed on Persia's apparent carelessness, and some day, perhaps, Ghelan may be what it now should be—a great storehouse—but for a different race. The armies of the great Czar may find nourishment from the neglected, yet fruitful lands bordering the Caspian Sea.

It was with feelings of disappointment that we saw the walls of Pir-i-Bazaar (the old bazaar) just ahead, and knew our pleasant gallop was over, and yet we were glad to finish our travels, at least so far as Chaparing, and look forward to a much pleasanter journey by water. At the gate we dismounted, thus finishing our ride of 294 miles in less than

three days. It was a sense of relief to think that our last ride in Persia was over.

We were met by a swarm of ferocious-looking boatmen, chiefly Turcomans or Russian Tartars, who vied with each other in their prices, as also in the suitability of their boats to the exalted gentlemen. One Tartar evidently thought to place the question of superiority beyond dispute by stating that his boat had been blessed by a priest, who had condescended to ride therein only a week before.

It was impossible to gain a hearing amid the babble of Russo-Tartar, Turkish, and Ghelanee (a dialect of Persian), and at last, finding one who spoke Persian fluently, we engaged him to carry us across the river to Enzelli. Whether it was the *Bunga* on which rested the priestly blessing or not, I cannot say, but of all rockings and joltings it has been my ill-luck to experience, this trip from Pir-i-Bazaar to Enzelli crowns all. In moderately calm weather it is about a three hours' pull.

The river on either side reminds one of fairy tales read in younger days. The scene is of a magnificent description, the broad river dotted here and there by floating islands, on which rode large herons and other birds.

Just after sunset we saw lights ahead, and heard loud shouts, which unmistakably announced our close proximity to the shore. In a few moments the fact was manifested by a severe bumping of the boat. We at once sprang ashore, and were led through a labyrinth of cotton-bales and foul-smelling bazaars to the house of a wealthy Armenian merchant, for whom we held a letter of introduction from Teheran. An hospitable welcome was given us by this gentleman.

On inquiring as to when the steamer would leave for Nijni Novgorod, or rather for Baku, for at the latter place the much-talked-of quarantine was established, another surprise and disappointment was at hand—the steamer had called the previous day and proceeded on to

Astrabad. It was expected back, our informant added, in three days, on its return voyage. The news was unwelcome for many reasons. We must of necessity remain here until the steamer's arrival. We were impatient of delay on account of the warnings received before leaving the Persian capital, and we were also reluctant in trespassing upon the hospitality of an unknown foreigner.

The time passed away in tedious waiting. Not a single book or paper could be counted amongst our possessions. The bazaars were carefully inspected for a scrap of English or French news, but the only reply to our enquiries for a book or paper was, 'Inglice neest Ooruss ast' ('No English, but we have Russian'). Each morning we strolled on the beach, eagerly scanning the horizon in search of our steamer.

The fourth day at length arrived, and as our host informed us that the vessels usually passed before noon, we arose betimes and

packed our small portmanteaus, and prepared for our next journey. We climbed an adjacent hill to watch for the approach of the steamer, and not until long after noon was past did we surrender our position. Evening passed, and with it no boat. One or two were confident that she had passed without calling, but when there's life there's hope; we still hoped for her early arrival.

The next day had far advanced; we had taken our usual stroll along the coast, leisurely noting the different formations of sandstone, and watching the rippling waves, as did Robinson Crusoe on the uninhabited island. My friend suddenly called my attention to a thick cloud of smoke seaward, but thinking it was from the Persian royal yacht stationed at Enzelli, we took no further notice, and resumed our walk. In a few minutes, however, we observed two or three men rapidly approaching, and beckoning us to return.

Their reasons were quickly made known;

the steamer was nearing Enzelli, and would shortly be in the offing. Our belongings were quickly packed, and, having ordered a boat to be in constant readiness, we stepped off Persian soil, never again, perhaps, or in Persian, 'Inshallah'—'God willing'—to tread its barren plains and rugged mountains, or to hear the unsocial jar of native idiosyncrasies.

The steamer had given her signal, and we were soon breasting the waves and nearing our long-looked for haven, accompanied by our worthy host. On reaching the vessel the steps were lowered for us, and in a moment or two we trod the decks of the finest Caspian steamer the Russian mercantile navy can boast of. The *Alexandrovna* is an English-built ship, carried to the Caspian, and there fitted up; in fact, all Russian vessels are thus constructed, the woodwork alone being of Russian workmanship. The great difference between a Russian and an English vessel is everywhere apparent. The strict discipline, the cleanli-

ness and regularity which exists under the Union-jack is here looked for in vain.

On the deck many and varied were the sights that met our view. Near the vessel's stern sat a motley crowd, composed of Persians, Tartars, Circassians, and Russians, proceeding, probably, to the annual fair at Nijni Novgorod, apparently highly interested in the subject selected for conversation, which evidently had some direct allusion to our arrival. Nearer the saloon stood a group of Russian officers, who eyed us with looks which certainly could not be called sweet or even welcome. The captain (a Swede) was on the poop giving his customary commands in an essentially Russian manner, each sentence being accompanied by expressions little fitted to proceed from such a source.

All around the vicinity of the upper deck were passengers who paid but deck fare, and who were lying on their thickly inhabited rugs. Some were busily engaged with the family

'samovar,' others were occupied with their evening's devotions, whilst others were amusing themselves by hunting to the death the numerous animals occupying their rugs.

We hemmed our way past the cooking establishment (near which place I never more ventured to expose myself, or rather, my stomach, which is much too sensitive to admit of an inspection of a Russian cuisine), on, through the idle, indifferent groups of lazy Persians, who were perseveringly drawing at their kalyuns, and were at last politely shown down to the saloon by the engineer, who proved to be an Englishman, owning, as he told me, a very unenviable position in the Russian mercantile navy.

Luncheon was just ready, and if the Russians cannot be complimented on their extravagant ideas of cleanliness, they most certainly hold a prominent position as regards the quantities of food consumed in a short space of time. This luncheon, called in Russian

'sakutschky,' is of an extensive composition. Fish, in all the perfection of Russian cookery, is brought, different kinds of cheese, pickles, sardines, jam, and kaviar, the latter a peculiarly Russian appetiser; various other eatables are placed upon the table; three kinds of liquor are invariably to be seen at meal-times on Russian tables—red, green, and white vadki; it is surprising the manner in which this powerful spirit is tossed off by those who are its habitual patronisers. A large glass, filled some half dozen times, is swallowed so quickly that one would imagine it is the old story retold, 'One must be followed by another for friendship's sake;' perhaps it is done so that one may keep the other warm.

Sakutschky is followed in about half an hour by breakfast or dinner, to which soups are brought in an endless stream, the essence of meat, vegetables, fish, all being represented. Cutlets and large joints are followed by a variety of smaller dishes and pastry, each one

being abundantly supplied with cigarettes, which are puffed between dishes. Ladies also indulge in this disgusting habit of smoking during dinner and other meals.

Every accommodation is excellently arranged except the sleeping apartments, which are but ill-adapted for one's comfort. No sign of linen or covering is seen, even in the saloons of a Russian boat, and if asked for, an amazed stare and a shake of the head is all the reply given by the steward. One is forcibly struck by this lack of—in our eyes—cleanliness, but such is the case throughout the dominions of the Czar; a fur underneath and a similar covering above seems to be the only requirements a Russ aspires to.

The second day, as we approached the island of Baku, the captain, in course of conversation, informed us that until receiving advices from the commandant, he was altogether uncertain as to whether the quarantine still existed or not. After anchoring in the road-

steads, an officer was sent ashore to report our arrival; he shortly afterwards returned, accompanied by a military officer, who in no polite manner asked for our passports. He did not deem it necessary to further instruct us, but in an imperious way addressed some remarks to a subordinate officer, probably referring to ourselves and baggage. The English engineer kindly assisted us out of our perplexing situation, and told us that the quarantine still lived, and that for thirteen days we should be detained in the camp ashore.

The news was not inviting, but had we imagined the misery of the next fortnight I for one should not have experienced such pleasant dreams in my slumber that night. The appearance of the shore had no cheering aspect; a few small tents dotted at regulation distance on a barren slope; for miles the land had the appearance of a sand heap. The continual wash of the waves had carried away the solid

shores, nothing being left with the exception of sand, accumulated by ages of perpetual influxive action. On our left, some two miles away, stood a lighthouse, fitted and worked by an English engineer, who, at this time, however, was at home on leave. Nearer the shore was a rude wooden construction, which we were told were temporary barracks.

The following morning found us landed on this heaven-forsaken land, and were led by two soldiers to a miserable hut, which they said, or rather by their gesticulations made us to understand, was placed at our disposal. We opened the ponderous doors, and our astonishment and disgust may perhaps be imagined on finding some twelve or fifteen Tartars and Russian soldiery, who were in various ways occupied. Some were cooking, others were playing at cards, whilst some were breaking up sticks and bringing in manure to burn.

The loathsome sight was horrifying, espe-

cially at the bare idea of spending twelve days in such a place and with such company. We determined to rest ourselves on the sands exposed to the night air rather than with such a wretched rabble. A few bare shelves had been fixed one above another for sleeping accommodation, but by the number of Tartars occupying the hut I imagine that at least three must perch on a shelf.

We protested against such barbarous treatment, and demanded to see the governor, to whom we were conducted. This exalted personage was an aged military officer, exceedingly corpulent, so much so that it was evident he had not long been stationed on this waste of sand, or otherwise he possessed a good larder. He informed us that we must either accept what was offered, or we could be provided with a small tent, to which he pointed. It appeared to be of the class usually erected for secondary purposes, about five feet high, and the same in length and width.

Reluctantly, and with no complimentary words, we accepted the latter munificent offer from our gaoler, and at once took possession. The torn piece of canvas—I cannot call it a tent—with a stick in the centre, and held down by huge stones, would not permit of one standing erect; no table or chair—nothing but a carpet of sand.

We momentarily expected something being brought in the shape of a bed—but vain the hope. A soldier, who by his appearance bespoke himself a factionnaire, brought a few pieces of dry bread and a small dish of black meat, which up to the present time I am at a loss to imagine its orginative source; it might have been in existence six months previously. The soldier — a native of Warsaw — spoke good German, said it was, he thought, pickled beef, and looked enviously at the dish. A few strips of wood were brought, with which we managed to erect a table.

In this small place three men were supposed

to exist for twelve days, in order to prevent an imaginary plague being introduced into Russian territory. Our baggage, clothes, and even the money we possessed had been taken to the room consecrated by the disinfectant officer, and there smoked (the money was washed), and returned. We were told to put on the disinfected clothes, and send those we wore to undergo the same purifying process. Evening came; the wind howled in fitful gusts around our feeble covering. Not a light could be obtained, not for money, and certainly not for love. Our only alternative was to woo, and try to win balmy sleep, the only solace of our present existence.

Towards midnight the rain fell in torrents, perfectly deluging our frail habitation; the ground was simply a puddle. We were literally soaked through, and to add to our misfortunes the wind blew in such hurricanes that shortly after the midnight guard had been changed one blast fiercer than the rest took

our covering from over us, and dashed it yards away. The soldiers assisted in its re-erection, but our pitiable plight made sleep impossible.

Fortunately this was the only accident that happened during our imprisonment. The following morning we obtained permission to erect our shelter in a more secluded spot. The days were passed in roaming backwards and forwards on the beach, or in watching the trading yachts skimming o'er the waves. Bales of cotton were stacked all around us; these afforded some shade from the sun during the day, our tent being untenable.

On taking a retrospective view of those miserable days, I can scarcely imagine how they were passed without a book or a scrap of literary amusement, or how the dreaded plague was not generated by the closely packed huts full of filthy beings, Russian officers not being the cleanest individuals in the universe. Strict ideas of cleanliness do not seem to be deeply

implanted in the minds of the inhabitants of Russia; perhaps they have no proverb in their interesting language or sacred books which affirms that this virtue is next to Godliness; or maybe it has been forgotten.

To count the progressive days, we cut a mark on the tent-pole each evening. At last we counted twelve marks, and on the same day (emancipation day) an escort took us up to the quarters of the regimental surgeon, who, after a few senseless words, gave us a certificate of physical perfection, and on the payment of two roubles — four shillings — our passports were returned. We were now emancipated slaves, breathing the pure air of freedom outside the boundary marks of the sixty square yards of quarantine land, which was jealously guarded by patrols of soldiers.

During the afternoon the sea had been running unusually high, and fears were expressed by the officer in command—who, unlike the rest, was civil—as to the possibility

of taking us out to the steamer, which was now riding at anchor.

At the idea of a prolongation of our exile we offered—to a Russian mind—a fortune to the boatman who would offer to take us; for a few minutes the gaze of the bystanders was alternately fixed on the white-crested waves, and then on the rouble notes, which eventually won the day. Three stalwart Tartars volunteered for the duty, and in a few minutes our little skiff was gallantly heading the gigantic waves. The distance was not great, yet some time passed before we neared the vessel, our frail boat having received one or two severe shocks; but we providentially passed through the angry, foaming waves without accident, and once more our thoughts with ourselves wandered westward.

CHAPTER XV.

Aboard the *Marie*. — Derbend.— Deplorable Sights.— Autocracy.—Vatki.—Russian Policy.—'I am a Pole.' —Nihilism.—Freedom.—Bulgarian Champions.—Astrachan.—Imperial Escorts.—'Niet, Niet.'—Volga.— Tartars.— Saratova.— Nijni.—The Fair.—Bargains.— Tariff Rates.— Railway Locomotion. — Preparing to Alight.—Moscow.—Russian Jehus.

THE vessel was similar in build to the one in which we had left Enzelli, the saloon affording more accommodation to the requirements of travellers. As our vessel steamed out to sea we hailed an incoming steamer, which brought more passengers from Persia (those whom we passed near Teheran), who were destined to the loathsome dens of the sand-heap whilst we were ploughing the waves with the glad

thought in our hearts that England was once more ahead, and that our next stoppage (Nijni Novgorod) was but eight days from London.

We passed Alexinatz and Derbend, the latter a most picturesque town situated on the hillside overlooking the Caspian, once a Persian city, but now owning allegiance to the White Czar. On nearing the mouth of the Volga, we were transhipped from the *Marie* to the flat-bottomed steamer which awaited our arrival. It was much inferior to the one we had left; in this small tug we were conveyed to Astrakhan.

Leaving Patrosk, I witnessed a sight which will long remain deeply impressed on my mind, as being paramount in cruelty to anything I had previously seen. The severe losses Russia had sustained, in her atrocious war with Turkey, rendered it necessary that these gaps made by starvation and Turkish bullets, must in some way be filled, especially as public thought and

official whisperings verged on war with England.

A Russian recruiting officer was aboard our steamer, and as the vessel anchored at Patrosk, he stepped ashore to enlist in the army of their Czar all those who were so unfortunate as to come under military rules. He was accompanied by an armed force, who led between their ranks, lads, young men, and those bowed with years and sorrow, all bound —they knew not whither.

I could scarcely conceive the meaning of this procession, but on hearing bitter cries, heart-rending shrieks, and lamentations too intense for description, I ventured to inquire of a fellow-traveller the meaning of such a scene. His reply was curtly given: 'The Czar has need of them!'

Mothers parting with sons scarcely over their—what should be—schooldays. Wives fondly clinging to their only hope and support. Old women looking amazed and dumb-stricken

at the thought of losing for ever their aged partners, some of whom appeared to need more the support of younger hands than to bear arms in the field. Loved ones bidding last farewells to each other; for the idea of reunion on earth could not be entertained, and the Russian belief of a reunion in another world is not over powerful.

During these anxious moments, the recruiting officer had been carrying round, and compelling the men to drink, large quantities of fiery liquor called vatki. The result was soon but too painfully evident. Those who but a few minutes ago had been loud in their grief, now became frantic with madness. The signal for our departure was at length given; long and terrible cries arose from the bereaved, heart-broken women—for even in Russia we must feel that every heart knows its own bitterness—louder and more fiendish became the yells of the infuriated men entirely controlled by the maddening potency of the vatki.

Two stalwart young fellows, I noticed, who had refused to accept the poisonous drink—two young wives with small babes had been left behind—the widows, for such they might now be called, bitterly mourned the separation; and as the vessel moved away their sorrow appeared to be boundless. For some time these two young men were restrained from leaping off by the soldiers; as the boat gradually moved away, and the landing-place became more indistinct, their eyes were strained, hats waved, and shouts rent the air, and as the island became lost to our view so they for ever lost the dear faces they loved. Heavy heart-rending sobs broke from these crushed lives—such sobs and heavings which a man may only experience once during a life.

My thoughts naturally took their flight to the source of all this anguish and despotism, and strongly did I condemn to a Russian officer the iniquitous practice of such barbarous

tyranny, and the injurious social and national effects of such unreasonable dog-like despotism.

This, I thought, was in the country which boasts, and is boasted of carrying the torch of civilisation to Turkey! Better by far would Turkish humanity civilise the Russian Government. And this, too, was the effects of the Turkish war; unjust, ambitiously determined, evil and despicable as it was. May we ever be preserved from such a fearful system of inhuman lawlessness.

These conscripted men would of course be sent to the northern boundaries of Russia, or to the far west of Poland, perhaps form part of the Balkan or the Bessarabian guard, certain it is that they would never be quartered near their ruined homes on the Caspian Sea. Just as those recruited in Warsaw, and other parts of Poland, are despatched to Turkestan, Circassia, or Central Asian provinces.

Exceedingly mindful is Russia of her policy in this matter; perhaps through fear of in-

ternal dissensions and rebellions, were they permitted to remain in their native districts; the place where they, under compulsion, joined the army of the White Czar, glorious as it may be to some Russian-loving eyes.

When under quarantine, at Baku, I asked our factionnaire where it was he enlisted. His eyes glistened with delight at the thought of his early home; then his face assumed a mournful sadness, as he replied in good German: 'I am a Pole, and was taken from Warsaw.'

I then inquired as to the probability of his return.

'Ah, sir,' said he, at the same time cautiously looking round—'Ah, sir, I shall never again see Warsaw.' He informed me that when removed from Baku, Turkestan would be their next home, from whence they will never return.

Such is the accursed and blasting course adopted by the humanising Government of

Russia—a course which cannot fail to ultimately prove the ruin and downfall of their military greatness. And these terrible inroads on national customs and feelings must eventually burst forth in one common cry for justice and freedom. That cry will prove disastrous to Russia. May we not hear the commencement of the nation's bitterness even now? The ever-occurring official assassinations, Secret Societies, Nihilism, and Socialism; is not this interpreted in one word—'Freedom?' and that freedom will come sooner or later, we feel assured; and the longer it is postponed and brutally put off, the more disastrous will it prove to not only Russia, but also to other equally fettering and tyrannous autocracies.

The treaty of Berlin enumerates certain independent provinces to receive from the Turk free autonomy, which, we presume, signifies living by laws according to one's own mind. Has Russia got this self-government? Is Russia capable of apportioning out to others

that which she herself never possessed? Are the minions of Russia to carry freedom and humanity to a people whose laws, though corrupt, excel her own in every respect?

Such, however, was the case. Russia was allowed to declare war simply for the sake—as their devout Czar remarked—to uplift and free the poor Bulgarians. The sole and only cause was to obtain Constantinople.

When this so-called freedom had been proclaimed to Bulgaria, Russian troops marched back to vile slavery in their own land. Such is the land out of whose midst arose that great cry for Bulgarian emancipation and Turkish annihilation. The free Bulgarian, however, since acknowledges that the reform of his laws was a sad mistake; and he owns to having, in common language, leaped from the frying-pan into the fire. And there will he stay.

We reached Astrakhan the following day about noon. It is not what one would wish

to see in a first class seaport, and we thought, as our steamer anchored in the harbour, that by all appearances, Russia sorely needed a Samuel Plimsoll.

Rotten-looking crafts lie almost sunken by the heavy cargoes of timber from Nijni, bound —should they ever reach them—to the southern ports of the Caspian.

The streets are miserably dirty and uneven; the buildings, chiefly of pine brought down from Nijni Novgorod, are of an inferior style of architecture, even from what is generally seen in Russia. The droskies (public vehicles) painfully reminded me of the almost-forgotten land-journeys we had been accustomed to in the land of Iran.

Our passports and luggage were most closely examined by the officials of the Customs' Department. Innumerable questions were put as to our reasons for travelling in Eastern Russia, and at such a time; we were eyed with evident suspicion by the General of Customs, who

wished to know if the one who possessed the English passport (meaning myself) was a diplomatic messenger. The pretensions to civility and courteousness which were shown to us, were doubtless to gain, if possible, additional information to that offered by our respective passports and other documents, but in this they failed, and we departed in peace to our hotel, after receiving what is unusual even in Russia, extra papers which conveyed to distant authorities the time we remained in Astrakhan, and the route which we intended to travel.

These unlooked-for attentions were gratuitously repeated at each town where we halted for a few hours from our journey.

In Moscow and St. Petersburg their zeal and interest in our welfare could not be exceeded. Escorts were—unasked for—placed at our service. When told of the unnecessary trouble thus taken, the gendarme imperiously waved his gloved hand and shook his crested

head. The only remark with which we were from time to time honoured by these law-guardians, was a repeated 'Niet, niet!' ('No, no!')

Twenty-four hours in Astrakhan, and once more our course lay westward.

The Volga, from this Caspian port up to Nijni Novgorod, presents various objects of interest in the wild scenery on its banks, the numerous islands which we pass, and the rudely-erected tents and huts of the Russian Tartars, some of which are unfit for habitation. These kennels—for they are nothing more—afford shelter to a whole family and more. No thought of indecency enters their heads, when parents, children, young and old, together crowd, day and night, in one small filthy room.

Like their neighbours, the Persians, the Russian never thinks of changing his wearing-apparel on retiring to rest. Their bed is of easy contrivance, a thick skin forms the under

portion on which he lays, and without divesting himself of a scrap of clothing, the weary Tartar prostrates himself on his rug, being covered with another though thicker one similar in appearance. Sheepskins are generally kept for this purpose.

The dwellings and habits, the everyday life and the moral and religious laws which are enjoyed by a Persian or a Bedouin Arab, are far superior and preferable to those of the Russian peasant Tartar, persecuted as he is by the Christian rulers. They have no church especially dedicated to their religion, yet they find means to devote certain portions of the day to sacred purposes in the house of Mohammedan compatriots.

Northwards from Astrakhan, the first place of importance is Saratova, a military centre for Eastern Russia; it is a thickly populated town chiefly inhabited by Tartar Mussulmans, who have now felt the yoke of military despotism, and cringe at the thought of wearing, by com-

pulsion, the uniform of a Christian sovereign, knowing that ere long they will receive the command to shed the blood of their fellow-believers, soldiers of some distant khanats, which is gradually falling under the dominion of Russia's mighty power.

Up the Volga to Nijni, presents similar scenes of the destructive power ruling them; poor, ignorant, superstitious Tartars, driven like wild sheep by the soldiery of a Christian (!) district, tolerated and encouraged by the officers of a similar religion, (no Tartar ever rises above the rank of a private), their lives one continual sacrifice and sorrow at seeing usurpers occupying the ground their forefathers were wont to call theirs. Death, under such circumstances, must be welcomed by the patient follower of Mahomed's doctrines as a great relief.

At Saratova we saw a band of these wretched Tartar soldiers pinioned and manacled, sentenced to perpetual imprisonment in the

wilds of Silberia for some trivial offence, perhaps returning a blow given by some brutal fellow-soldier, but a Christian; or may be for using words unallowed by the laws of serfdom. The cause of their exilement was unknown to us; yet, be it for what it may, the sight was sickening, and I involuntarily and fervently ejaculated: 'Thank God I am not a Russian!'

Cruel and bitter are the tortures ruthlessly inflicted upon the unfortunate victims who fall into the hands of the Emperor's merciless functionaries. But their heartrending cries can never reach the ears of the civilised world; the ruthless bonds of the despot's sway are tightly drawn. Once *en route* for the mines of Siberia, they are heard of no more by those who knew them previous to the time when they fell victims to the most brutal and iniquitous despotism that disgraces blushing humanity.

A Polish Russian of Baku, for teaching

English and French, was arrested, and after undergoing barbarous punishment in a filthy den of the common prison, received the dread sentence which has brought terror and dismay to many an innocent subject of Russia's imperial rule, and hurled the accursed bolt which has broken many a heart, and filled the soul with blank despair of the dark dismal future: 'To Siberia.' The sentence is not an elaborate summing up, yet who can picture the terrible fate of one thus condemned?

Women, tenderly nurtured, who have been reared in all the luxurious refinement of European society, all are subjected to the demoniacal will of the Russian Government. The shameful scenes enacted on the road to Siberia, especially upon the unprotected, pitiable daughters of Eve, are almost beyond belief. After quitting the place where the harsh sentence has been thundered forth, the prisoners are taken to St. Petersburg, from whence they are driven, chained together,

over the rough, stony, frozen roads leading to the snowy Siberian plains, subjected to all the infamous practices of a savage soldiery. After weary days of marching they arrive, with lacerated feet and torn flesh, at the frontier station; here they are handed over to other equally brutish taskmasters, and here, also, the curtain falls; we cannot penetrate further; what their sufferings are afterwards, is to us a sealed book. Such an infernal system, tolerated and upheld by a professedly Christian Government, places Russia far beyond the pale of civilisation, and almost of savage humanity.

Four days brought us to the great European-Asiatic emporium Nijni; and here we finished our sea voyage until reaching Calais, or Ostend.

Nijni Novgorod is world-wide famous for one thing only, *i.e.*, the fair which is annually held within its spacious markets. Merchants from all parts of Russia flock to Nijni during

that time. The Persian, with his cunning, suspicious eyes, brings the elaborate silkwork from Resht and Teheran, the lambskins from Central Persia, Baghdad, and Kashan. The Affghan trader exhibits his wares from Khiva, Bokhara, Samarcand, and Merv.

Tea is brought direct from China over the vast Asiatic deserts; it is conspicuous by the immense black sheepskins in which it is packed, and reminds one of the Turkish water-skins.

Rich silk and needlework, from Cashmere and our North-Western provinces, finds a salable market at Nijni. Bright blades from Damascus. Sacred clay from Mecca. Persian calf from Hamadan; and various other equally famous 'makes' are seen here.

Merchants from Tiflis, and other parts of Circassia, bring with them articles more common to European eyes. Russian furs of every kind and quality are offered in abundance. Passing through the bazaars, the crowd is a motley one. The Khivan, with his long robe

and heavy sheepskin headpiece. Tartars, Turcomans, Affghans, and Persians dressed in the similar fashion but stamped with a different cast of feature. Circassians, Armenians, Russians, and even Turks, will in their turn command a few moments' eager attention.

All are zealous in their desire to 'give' something to your excellency. The bargains are very similar to Persian ones, nothing is sold, everything is given away; the recipient of these favours giving in return what his generous heart may command. Should the free offering be below the market value of the article, the money is at once cast down on the dirty road as unclean; a tremendous battle of words ensue, the victory usually falling to the purchaser, although for some time the angry vendor persistently refuses to even touch the money; but as his anger fades away, new resolves are formed, and with mutterings as to its worthlessness, he carefully deposits

the coins in the depths of his capacious pocket.

Pictures of Christ and the Blessed Virgin are in great request; each passer-by uncovers his head and makes the sign of the cross to the clay image.

During our stay at Nijni, the fair had but just commenced, all kinds of recent Parisian *nouveautés* were exuberantly strewn about the various stalls. Very little English ware is to be seen, owing, undoubtedly, to the high tariff-rates in existence; and through years of correspondence on the subject, it is impossible to alter the fixed rates—at least, so say the Russian Government looking, of course, to their own advantage.

On the evening of the second day we left Nijni Novgorod, by railroad, for the ancient capital of All the Russias. Early the following morning, on awaking from an interrupted and uncomfortable sleep, we were told that Moscow would be reached in two hours.

The morning was cold, and to our minds winterly; the surrounding scenery was not of a most brilliant description, yet in the thousands of frost-silvered fir-trees which we passed, and the noise of the railway-engine as it puffed and shrieked through the forest, we found some interest and amusement.

Accustomed as we had been for years to the cold cheerless and comfortless saddle-rides, this mode of travelling was almost a novelty, and we felt scarcely less strange than did a Persian khan who, for the first time, was sitting somewhat uneasily in a railway-carriage; he was travelling to Berlin, to prepare the way for his Imperial master, who was then *en route, viâ* Tiflis.

The Russian railway to Moscow, though but an inferior one in speed, led us to think at least that we were now in Europe, away from the dreary night marches, bad accommodation, and affrighted sleeps.

We shortly observed our fellow-travellers

were preparing to alight; some were still of the cushioned shelves used for sleeping; rugs were being wrapped up, furs buttoned, the last glass of vatki swallowed, and by this time, on looking from the carriage, I saw the gilded domes of the Imperial City, under whose walls the flower of the French army was so bitterly blighted. Moscow, the city of cities, as it is called by the Russian enthusiasts.

On alighting in the railway station, a crowd of droski drivers at once surrounded us, fiercely making war with each other as to who should drive their excellencies. One remarked that his horse was the sweetest creature and most perfect of animals; another chimed in with, 'Oh, little father, this long-cherished companion of mine was born to carry such ones as your excellency;' others were sure-footed, docile, and loving. We failed to see in Moscow that strict discipline which is enforced in other parts of Russia and the Con-

tinent generally with respect to these public conveyances.

After a strict examination of our documents, we were accompanied by the inevitable gendarme to the Hôtel de Paris.

CHAPTER XVI.

Moscow.—Kremlin.—Image-worship.—'Sweetest of Companions.'—Paganism *versus* Russianism.—St. Basil.—St. Petersburg.—Newski Prospect.—Winter Palace.—St. Isaac's.—Irreverence.—Abrupt Departure from the Capital.—War Imminent.—Slaves.—Poland.—Fertility of Soil.—Warsaw.—Are you an Englishman?—Berlin.—Column of Victory.—Paris.—Exhibition.—Calais.—Midnight Voyage.—'Land Ahead.'—The White Cliffs.—Home, sweet Home.—Charing Cross.—Finis.

MOSCOW is by far the finest city of Eastern Europe. One writer has justly remarked that he who has never seen Moscow has not seen Russia. The chief interesting features of the ancient capital have been graphically and ably described by

previous travellers. The world-famed Kremlin, with its by-gone associations, religious and national—both, however, go hand-in-hand in Russia; the bell-tower of Ivan, the coronation hall, the Chinese town, and the various cathedrals and churches—all are objects of deep interest to the traveller in Moscow.

One thing struck us more forcibly than in any other city of Russia: the fearful and degrading system of image-worship, and the amount of superstitious idolatry which exists in Moscow, which is unequalled even by the devout Guebre, or the more fanatic follower of Islamism. The great extent to which this abasing custom is carried must cause aversion to anyone but those who view with admiring eyes, and who publicly own, their toleration to such baneful practices. One can scarcely pass a street unless, in some prominent place, a gaudily-painted picture of the Holy Virgin with her infant babe in her arms attracts our attention—not simply by the image, but at-

tracted by the crowd who, with uncovered heads, prostrate themselves before the sacred effigy.

Our droski driver could not pass a church unless, with a sharp check, he pulled his 'sweetest of companions' up, and performed, with uplifted hat, the sign of the cross. Surely a more debasing form of religion cannot be imagined. These images, with their attendant prostrations, are seen in all public buildings, churches, theatres, hotels, railway stations, and other frequented spots.

The Mahomedan, as he prays with uncovered feet, turning his enraptured gaze towards Mecca, and praying with apparent fervour; his simple childlike utterances, evoking blessings from Mahomed, can be looked upon with a greater degree of admiration, infallibly teaching one lesson to all men—his entire submission and subserviency, under all circumstances, to the one great Allah, whose immutability and omnipotency he never questions;

the Guebre, when, as the rising sun tells him that God has reappeared, he in gladness falls down and humbly acknowledges the almighty power of the 'Only One,' and as he looks with sadness upon the sinking luminary he again prostrates himself and earnestly beseeches His return, he may be greatly pitied and yet esteemed in his ignorant yet well-meant adoration of the Supreme God; the Hindoo, who, in his earnest desire to seek the face of the Holy One, lacerates his own flesh, performs terrible penances, as indicative of his deep determination to call forth the divine assurance of pleasure from his gods; Bhuddaism, in the originality of its almost spotless doctrine, its purity and Christ-like attributes; Brahminism, with its terrible ordeals, ceremonies, and inhuman practices, tending to alienate man from his brother and father from son;—all these religions, various and diversified though they be, each requiring the one thing needful—these, I maintain,

spring from faithful belief that the wrath of God is thereby appeased, and the pathway to a future world made easy; they are not to be despised, but pitied. Surely all these are more real, more Godlike in their faith, than the absurd, unmeaning, and disgusting acts of the people of that country which carries freedom and civilisation to all who may be so unfortunate as to be less powerful than herself?

The Holy Virgin of Vladimir receives a pretty good share of these hypocritical devotions. The marble slab at its base appears, by its worn-out look, to have witnessed not a few scrapings and bowings.

The Russian churches, especially St. Isaac's at St. Petersburg, are undoubtedly the most gorgeously illuminated places of worship in the known world. Nothing can surpass in grandeur the internal decorations of St. Isaac's.

The church of St. Basil, the oldest one in Russia, received a visit from us. Works of deep interest are found in its architectural

adornments, it is all towers and domes of different shapes, colours, and sizes, of that style of architecture seen nowhere but in Moscow and Pekin. Not two pillars are alike in altitude or circumference—it appears, from a distance, one vast confused mass of smaller and larger pillars heedlessly thrown together.

The sights of Moscow afford amusement for a longer stay than we could make at that particular time. On our programme was St. Petersburg, Warsaw, Berlin, Hanover, Metz, and the Paris Exhibition. The evening of the second day in Moscow, found us *en route* for the present capital of that empire which boasts as having under its tyrannous sway Christian and Tartar, Jew and Mahomedan, and those who walk under the divine favour and approving smile of Rome; an empire out of whose people every spark of manliness has long since been crushed—who are forbidden to speak in their own homes the language their forefathers spoke with pride—

men whose ancestors were lions in the fray—whose eyes flashed fire at the thought of serving a foreign foe, but who now bear the burthen, heavy as it is, without much hope of its alleviation—Poland still cries out for vengeance.

St. Petersburg was reached in about fifteen hours from Moscow. His Imperial Majesty the Shah had but just arrived as a guest of his royal neighbour, so that St. Petersburg was in its best attire. The pomp and highest display of military greatness was given in honour of the Shah's arrival, though we are inclined to believe it was intended more to effectually impress him with the power of Russia's military system, than as any mark of respect to himself, at least, we know that such was the effect.

The streets of St. Petersburg cannot be called grand; the pavement of their Piccadilly (the Newski Prospect) is not comparable with some East-end river lanes of London. It is not by any means worthy of

comparison with Vienna, Berlin, or other European capitals; the extreme awkwardness of the buildings give a dull, prison-like air to the surroundings.

On court occasions, when the Winter Palace and other princely buildings are one mass of bright wax-lights, St. Petersburg is then resplendent in its highest glories; and certain it is, that the Winter Palace on such occasions as the one we witnessed on the evening of the Shah's arrival looks majestically grand, and few other buildings there are which would present such a splendid external as this Imperial Palace of Russia, when illuminated with a flood of small wax candles.

The finest building in the Russian capital is the magnificent Cathedral of St. Isaac's; its immense golden dome is seen glittering in the sun whilst still some distance from the city; the paintings, and other magnificent works of art, the jewelled tombs, are unequalled. For size, St. Isaac's must own a superior in the

monster structure of St. Peter's in the five-hilled city. A picture at St. Isaac's of the Holy Trinity is beyond all description. The whole of the Bible is panoramically represented in gaily coloured paintings around the sacred walls. One is somewhat amused by the sonorous chantings of a number of cowled priests who are marching with solemn tread around the tomb of Nicholas; but we pass on, fearing lest our smiles might be misconstrued. Mothers with new-born babes have somehow managed to reach the portal, and sprinkling a few drops of water on the face of the unconscious infant, turn away and, with apparent weakness, totter through the porch into the street, satisfied, however, that their offspring is now and henceforth safe from all evil influences.

A procession of priests now move to the entrance, the high priest most gorgeously clad in raiments of scarlet satin, with mitre and staff, surrounded by golden-robed brethren, who are still mournfully chanting their song

of sadness. We two are suddenly the objects of general attraction; I am at a loss to divine its cause, and turn in wonderment to my equally astonished companion.

At last we imagine its source—all heads are uncovered, as the priests pass, save ours; this must be why we are the subjects of such black looks. Our attendant gendarme touches my shoulder and beckons us to follow him from the crowd.

Our visit to St. Isaac's is thus abruptly terminated, and we proceed to our hotel to make the necessary preparations for the evening express to Warsaw. Orders had been given by the governor for us to leave at once.

From the capital to the Polish frontier, the scenery is of an uninteresting kind; forests of firs, enlivened at times with bright patches of cultivation, line the route. The train in which we travelled westward was full of Russian officers bound for Warsaw, there to join the 'army of action,' as the fighting corps are

called in Russia, in anticipation of a struggle with England.

All traffic was for the time entirely suspended; nothing but war materials and troops would be allowed to pass the strict surveillance of the military authorities, except, indeed, those who, like ourselves, held documents from the Prime Minister for our immediate use in travelling through their country.

Men and horses were huddled together in one common heap, despatched to the front in miserable filthy trucks, minus bed or bedding, having the most forlorn appearance it was ever my fate to behold. Although the war fever certainly pervaded at St. Petersburg, not the slightest attempt at enthusiasm was noticeable in these disconsolate-looking slaves, who, like dumb-driven cattle, were compelled to obey the despot's call to arms:

> 'Their's not to question why!
> Their's but to do and die.'

The soldiers I saw in Russia (with the ex-

ception of those in the capital) did not, I hope, afford a true specimen of the secret of Russia's greatness; boys scarcely in their teens and unable to carry a gun as it should be borne, old men who had not yet recovered from their surprise at being torn from their homes, were alike being hurled to the front, perhaps to meet the relentless tide of British bayonets—to meet and be a barrier to the rough thrusts of a determined, free fighting Briton.

In conversation, it was evident that the chances of war were far above the claims of peace; and the favourite topic seemed to be the probable struggle with England, which would have been accepted with gladness by Russian officers; but for the favourable issues of war, the men too must feel that enthusiasm, or else the officers vainly strive.

In several places *en route* to Warsaw we noticed Turkish prisoners walking about the streets with downcast looks, conspicuous by

the sacred fez, chafing at their confinement in a land which to them was nought but unmeaning, senseless grimaces.

No one who has travelled through the dominions of the Czar can for a moment hesitate in confirming the opinion that the finest and richest portion of Russia is in the stolen Kingdom of Poland. Rich in fertility of soil, Poland presents some of the finest agricultural districts in Europe.

Our arrival in Warsaw, the capital of the proud yet servile Poles, was known to the officials ere we alighted from the train. The usual questions were put, passports demanded; we were then conducted to an hotel in the old city (for there are two in Warsaw, the old and the new portions). Here we remained two days, but, on account of the strict surveillance, were not sorry to depart. When on the heights around, and overlooking the old city with its broad-flowing river, we thought of Warsaw's proud champion bewailing the fate

of his beloved city. Warsaw is notable by its many interpretations of the names of streets, houses, etc., each one being written in the French language, and also in the Russian and Polish hieroglyphics.

At Warsaw I parted with my travelling-companion—he booked to Vienna, I to Berlin.

On arriving at the German frontier, another and last examination of my passport took place. Between Alexinatzova and Berlin, as I sat in the railway carriage reading a newspaper I had purchased at Warsaw, a gentleman, sitting in the next compartment, approached and politely addressing me, said: 'Are you an Englishman?' I, of course, answered in the affirmative, and, as it proved, had an agreeable companion to London.

We reached Berlin on the morning of Sunday the 19th of May. On the following day numerous places of interest were visited: the arsenal, royal colleges, and imperial palace

being amongst the number. Through the kindness of a German officer, whom I had previously known, I was shown through the various departments of the Government Office, the Parliament House, and other national institutions.

What struck me most in Berlin was the magnificent Column of Victory, opposite the Brandenberg railway station, celebrating the triumphant return of the German army from Paris; at its base are several guns captured at Metz and Versailles. A longing desire must swell in the bosom of every Frenchman as he views this monument of his country's disgrace, and he must look with intense ardour for the day when the despoiler's hand will have wrought a change in the appearance of the vicinity of the Brandenberg station.

From Berlin our route lay through Hanover and Cologne, and on to Brussels; thence to Paris, then the scene of the world's wonder and talk. The grand exhibition of 1878

had just been opened by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. It would be useless to attempt a description of the beauties of this city of splendour. Four days were but nothing at this time, yet during that short period we could not fail to acknowledge that for grandeur and magnificence the French capital has no equal.

The night express brought us on to Calais, where the Douvres-Calais steamer was in readiness to start. A few minutes and the rush of water from the paddles told us that our last journey had commenced; about midnight we learnt that in a short time the white cliffs would be in sight.

A beautiful moon shone in the clear heavens, enhancing the splendour of the scene. The sea was calm—scarcely a ruffle stirred the quiet waves as we cut through them at a good speed; the quietude suited our thoughts which were centred upon the not far distant land.

At last came the welcome words, 'Land

ahead!' Scarcely had they escaped the lips of the look-out man, ere a deafening cheer arose from the assembled passengers; and, accompanied by sweet music, the words of the well-known song, 'Home, sweet Home,' gently arose on the midnight air.

How it gladdened our hearts, and brought feelings of thankfulness to that Providence which had brought us safely through so many dangers and difficulties to our native land again.

'Auld lang syne,' and 'The old folks at home,' were played and sung by the band, the sweet gladsome notes being carried by the wind away to the now closely discerned shores of old England.

As we closely approached Dover, our feelings may be better imagined than described. Away from home and friends for years, eager anticipations of speedy welcomes and reunions which can only be experienced by those who have, under similar circumstances, neared their native shores.

The bright full moon shone on the white shores and the castled city of Dover; the breaking of the waves on our seagirt isle, could be plainly heard. Passengers were shaking hands and bidding each other farewell; the engines stopped, we were alongside the pier, and in another moment treading the most blessed soil in the world.

Customs' officer dispensed with, we stepped in the express for London, which was in waiting, and were soon whirling away towards the modern Babylon. On arrival at Charing Cross, it was a consolation to think our journeyings were almost over. Two or three days spent in obtaining necessaries (our possessions were not extensive) as regards clothing, etc., and I once more left London behind for Yorkshire, there to spend a few months, which could be well employed in recruiting health and strength, so necessary after a long sojourn in an Eastern climate.

FINIS.

APPENDIX.

STAGES AND DISTANCES—BUSHIRE TO TEHERAN.

Caravan road only Bushire to Shiraz.

From	*To*	*Distance.*	*Remarks on road.*
Bushire*	Ahmedi	24 miles	Sandy uninteresting plain, little vegetation.
Ahmedi	Borasjoon	24 ,,	,, ,, ,,
Borasjoon	Daliki	16 ,,	,, ,, ,,
Daliki	Kona-Takhta	16 ,,	Ascending mountains whole distance.
Kona-Takhta*	Kamarij	12 ,,	,, ,, ,,
Kamarij	Kazeroon	21 ,,	Fertile plain, date groves, etc.
Kazeroon*	Myun Kothal	21 ,,	Fertile plain, also mountainous.
Myun Kothal	Dasht-i-arjin	12 ,,	,, ,, ,,
Dasht-i-arjin	Khan-i-Zenyun	12 ,,	Hilly and uninteresting.
Khan-i-Zenyun	Chenar-Rahdar	25 ,,	Sandy plain.
Chenar-Rahdar	Shiraz	9 ,,	Sandy plain until nearing the city, when cultivated gardens, etc., are seen.
Shiraz*	Zargun	20 ,,	Mountainous and sandy.
Zargun	Seidoon	24 ,,	Richly cultivated plain; very interesting ruins.
Seidoon	Khavamabad	20 ,,	Cultivation and very interesting ruins.
Khavamabad	Morghaub	22 ,,	Cultivation here and there, also hilly; very interesting ruins.
Morghaub	Dehbeed	29 ,,	Some cultivation.
Dehbeed*	Khaneh Koreh	20 ,,	Sandy, uninteresting plain.
Khanah Koreh	Soormek	29 ,,	,, ,, ,,
Soormek	Abadeh	16 ,,	Some cultivation near villages.
Abadeh*	Shoolgistūn	24 ,,	Uninteresting sandy desert.
Shoolgistūn	Yezedkhast	24 ,,	,, ,, ,,
Yezedkhast	Mooksudbeg	20 ,,	,, ,, ,,

Those marked thus * are telegraph stations.

From	*To*	*Distance.*	*Remarks on road.*
Mooksudbeg	Koomeshah	16 miles	Cultivation near villages.
Koomeshah*	Meyer	20 ,,	Sandy plain.
Meyer	Margh	24 ,,	,, ,, some cultivation.
Margh	Ispahan	12 ,,	Cultivation, rich soil.
Ispahan*	Gez	12 ,,	,, ,, ,,
Gez	Moochikor	20 ,,	Sandy, uninteresting plain.
Moochikor	Soh	28 ,,	,, ,, ,,
Soh*	Kohrood	20 ,,	Very mountainous and interesting.
Kohrood	Kashan	22 ,,	,, ,, ,,
Kashan*	Sin-Sin	24 ,,	Sandy desert.
Sin Sin	Pasangoon	24 ,,	,, ,,
Pasangoon	Koom	20 ,,	,, ,, some cultivation near Koom.
Koom*	Pūl-i-dalork	20 ,,	Sandy desert.
Pūl-i-dalork	Hous-i-Sultan	25 ,,	,, ,,
Hous-i-Sultan	Kinarigird	25 ,,	,, ,,
Kinarigird	Teheran*	30 ,,	Hilly and well cultivated.

Caravan and chapar (post) road.

Between Zargun and Seidoon are the ruins of Persepolis and tombs of the kings.

From Khavamabad to Morghaub lie the ruins of Pasargadæ and the tomb of Cyrus, King of Persia.

The road from Bushire to Shiraz is too mountainous to allow of anything but caravan marching.

STAGES AND DISTANCES—TEHERAN TO BAGHDAD.

From	*To*	*Distance.*	*Remarks on road.*
Teheran*	Robad Kerim	28 miles	Sandy plain.
Robad Kerim	Khaniabad	32 ,,	,, ,,
Khaniabad	Kushkek	32 ,,	,, ,,
Kushkek	Beberan	31 ,,	Road more picturesque; hills, cultivation, etc.
Beberan	Nauberan	33 ,,	,, ,, ,,
Nauberan	Zerrah	38 ,,	,, ,, ,,
Zerrah	Malagerd	24 ,,	,, ,, ,,
Malagerd	Hamadan	28 ,,	,, ,, ,, At Hamadan are the tombs of Esther and Mordecai; excellent copper and leather work is obtainable here. There are some cruciform inscriptions in the hills near Hamadan.
Hamadan*	Assadabad	28 ,,	Rough road, but very interesting.
Assadabad	Kangavar	24 ,,	Cultivated plain.
Kangavar	Salmah	24 ,,	Fertile plain and interesting road.

Those marked thus * are telegraph stations.

From	To	Distance.	Remarks on road.
Salmah	Bist Situn	16 miles	Fertile plain and interesting road. There has been a palace called the Hall of Twenty Pillars (Bist Situn) at this place; portions still remain, and are worth inspection.
Bist Situn	Kermanshah	28 ,,	Villages and cultivation whole distance. Several ancient ruins near Kermanshah; the tomb of the prophet Ezra is worth the trouble of riding out to see.
Kermanshah*	Mahdasht	16 ,,	Road fertile and interesting.
Mahdasht	Haroonabad	28 ,,	,, ,, ,,
Haroonabad	Kirind	24 ,,	,, ,, ,,
Kirind	Sar-i-pūl	33 ,,	Road through long rocky pass, well wooded and fine scenery; in the centre of the pass is a resting-place, a large arch, said to have been built by Alexander the Great, by whom, also, the road through the pass was made.
Sar-i-pūl	Kasr-i-Shereen	29 ,,	Ruins of ancient castle built by Alexander the Great.
Kasr-i-Shereen	Khanikin	28 ,,	Sandy and uninteresting. Turkish frontier midway from Kasr-i-Shereen.
Khanikin*	Khasil Robad	20 ,,	Sandy and uninteresting.
Kasil Robad	Sharaban	24 ,,	Sandy plain whole distance; very little cultivation except in the neighbourhood of the villages.
Sharaban	Bakooba	28 ,,	
Bakooba	Baghdad*	29 ,,	

STAGES AND DISTANCES—TEHERAN TO RESHT.

From	To	Distance.	Remarks on road.
Teheran*	Meyun Jub	20 miles	Sandy plain.
Meyun Jub	Sangarabad	24 ,,	,, ,,
Sangarabad	Safar Koja	24 ,,	,, ,,
Safar Kaja	Abdulabad	20 ,,	Sandy plain, with but little vegetation.
Abdulabad	Casvin	12 ,,	Cultivation.
Casvin*	Mazra	16 ,,	,, rich soil.
Mazra	Porchinar	12 ,,	,, very interesting.
Porchinar	Menjeel	24 ,,	Hilly, uninteresting road.
Menjeel	Rustumabad	20 ,,	From Menjeel to Resht splendid country; forest of olives and wild pomegranates whole way.
Rustumabad	Kudoom	26 ,,	
Kudoom	Resht	20 ,,	

Those marked * are telegraph stations.

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